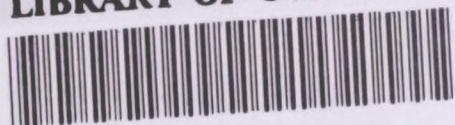


ADRIENNE

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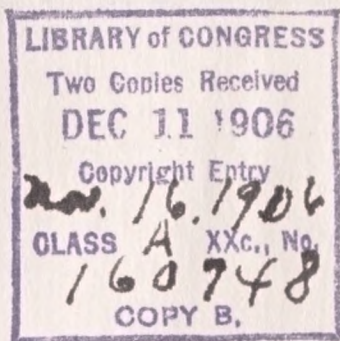
MRS. FRANK L. HOY



NEW YORK AND WASHINGTON
THE NEALE PUBLISHING COMPANY

1906

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TO

MISS L. EDNA TODD

ADRIENNE

CHAPTER I

On the outskirts of a lovely Southern suburb, surrounded by picturesque and extensive grounds now all bathed in spring-time's golden sunshine, stood an imposing-looking structure. From the central tower of this building a deep-toned bell struck the hour. Then came a crowd of girls of all sizes and ages hurrying out on the lawn, proclaiming, by joyous shouts and ringing laughter, the noon recess. Josie Colson and Adrienne de Courcelles, this moment passing through the open door of the reception-hall out upon the broad walk leading to the main entrance gate, began to stroll up and down, apparently engaged in earnest conversation. At the same time, over the smoothly cut grass, Kittie McVea came forward to meet them, gracefully swinging her hat by the ribbons, her short frowsy hair glittering in the sunlight and her dark blue eyes sparkling with life and mischief, as she sang out in her clear, strong voice the Marseilles Hymn.

"Hurrah, Kittie!" Josie called, halting in her slow promenade. "You have heard the late news? I am sure of it, by the way you are shouting the stirring notes of that martial song."

For a moment Kittie stopped short, but recovering herself, she answered, with a laughing glance into Josie's eyes,

"Considering the fact, Josie, that you have repeatedly declared I am given to the sensational, I can't see why you should be surprised at any effort on my part to keep up my worthy reputation. But as I have never guessed a riddle in my life, pray relieve my curiosity at once by telling me the news."

"Good gracious! girl, you don't mean to say, since the woods are alive with the wild and exciting report, that seventy-five thousand men have actually been called into service in the North, and that the South is working day and night to meet the emergency, that you haven't heard we are going to have war in earnest?" Kittie seemed to ponder seriously over Josie's words; but suddenly she said, with a little flash of spirit shining in her eyes,

"Well, I call it nothing short of an immense relief to have the momentous question settled at last, while I shall not hesitate to acknowledge that the prospect of soon seeing an army in battle array, marching to the music of fife and

drum, fills *me* with the direct inspiration to put on my war paint and rush forward to the fray."

"Is it so," laughed Adrienne, a little derisively, "that by a series of brilliant military coups on your part, Miss McVea, you would have your name go down to posterity among the annals of American history. But I will venture to say, Kittie, the first roar of guns on the battlefield would effectually cool any romantic zeal you may feel disposed to indulge in that direction."

"Then," said Kittie, darting a mischievous glance toward Adrienne, "you do not approve of a woman taking active part in defense of her country?"

"Not that I am stilted in my ideas of things, but she would be infinitely more useful in her place at home working for the soldiers who are fighting for her home and rights."

"Bah!" Kittie retorted, half-mockingly, "that is all sentimental bosh. Suppose, like Joan of Arc, one of our patriotic Southern women should feel it a duty during a serious conflict, to come to the front?"

"To give you a plain answer, I am sure I could never imagine a woman making herself conspicuous in any public movement, even though she be led by the over-weening desire to prostrate herself on the sacred altar of her beloved country."

But this moment the crash of a brass band playing a familiar march, being heard in the street, the girls, forgetting the subject in hand, hurried away in time to see a company of soldiers, whose bayonets, as they paraded by, flashed and glittered in the noon-day sun, all of whom were perfectly conscious of the many bright eyes focused upon them from the college grounds.

"Speaking of angels," sang out Kittie, glibly, "here are the soldiers now marching on, which reminds me my recitation in ancient history comes in the next 'division,' when I must tell of noble work accomplished by Aristides in forming the Athenian Confederacy—instituting important political reforms, and at last dying in the full confidence of his people. And my friends," cried Kittie, now merrily striking the attitude of a popular speaker as she raised her voice to be heard by the laughing group of girls near by, "I am glad to say here in the presence of you all, that I earnestly pray *we* of the South may be so fortunate as to have a leader who will emulate the illustrious statesman and general, Aristides, of ancient Athenian renown, who will free us from the threatened yoke, and establish the liberty of the Southern Confederacy. But, hark! the chapel bell is calling us to disperse each to her own sphere of duty." And

now laughing gaily, as she beckoned the crowd of girls to follow, Kittie suddenly vanished behind a thick cluster of trees.

CHAPTER II

Kittie McVea was the daughter of a well-known wealthy Mississippi planter. Her childhood having been passed in sunny places, naturally she was happy tempered, carrying about with her an atmosphere of fresh young life that captured all hearts. It is known that opposites attract one another, so it was not surprising that gay, debonair Kittie should have been won by the sweet gravity of Adrienne de Courcelles, whose exquisite personality drew her irresistibly within the charmed circle of her influence, a cordial friendship at once developing between them that was to endure the test of years.

It was in the morning, a week later than the foregoing, that Kittie was running headlong down the chapel stairway when she came suddenly upon Adrienne standing beside the window on the landing, deeply absorbed in the contents of a letter. Her curiosity awakened by the look of unusual gravity on Adrienne's face, she asked abruptly,

"Unpleasant news, Adrienne?"

The girl, raising her eyes, answered with a sad inflection in her voice, "Your surmise is

correct. This letter is from my guardian, Mrs. Somers of New Orleans, you know, urging me to return to the city without delay."

"Upon my word," Kittie blurted out, indignantly, "what has induced her to hurry you off, without so much as consulting your choice in the matter?"

"Though it would never enter my head to question the propriety of my guardian removing me from school at pleasure," said Adrienne, reflectively, "I must admit that I am at a loss to fathom this sudden demand, unless, indeed, it is on account of the floating war reports, together with the fact that Charles, her only son, who has already enlisted in the army, is looking every day to be sent to the front in Virginia. Ah! as he is his mother's idol, I know it will break her heart to see him go. I remember so well that his Chesterfield manners were my childish admiration, but his inordinate disposition to tease was always a bug-bear to me."

"But, Adrienne," Kittie here interrupted, "tell me of your father, whom you have been expecting so anxiously. Has he yet reached America?"

"Alas!" she answered, trying to steady her voice, while a melancholy shadow crept into her eyes, "I am beginning to fear this trouble between the North and South has entirely

upset his plans, and perhaps will delay his coming indefinitely."

"Oh, well," was the soothing reply, for Kittie had noticed the quiver on Adrienne's lips, and the starting tears in her eyes, "you should not let this unfortunate condition in the affairs of our country worry and distress you too much. I am sure all will come right in the end. Meantime, when you are gone, Adrienne, it will be so lonely here for *me*, I have decided to quickly follow your example."

"Would not that be sheer nonsense, Kittie, when it is your privilege to remain through the session? As for me, alas! my duty is so plain, that no matter how reluctant I feel, I must set to work to make preparations to leave."

Knowing Adrienne's departure would be the initial step toward breaking up the school, which he felt powerless to prevent, the president evidently was very much annoyed at receiving the peremptory message from her guardian.

In the mean while, Adrienne and Kittie employed the few hours left to them in the endeavor to conceal behind smiles the real sorrow they were feeling at being so unexpectedly separated. But when they parted at last at the carriage door, Kittie's face grew sad as she said,

"Have you thought, Adrienne, of how different things will be when we meet again? We

have been so free from care and responsibility all these months, at school, that it is only reasonable to expect a great change to come in our lives."

"The change may prove unpleasant, but we must be cheerful and patient under the trial. For what would be the good of looking on the dark side, and thus rob life of much of its brightness by borrowing trouble?"

"Ah, Adrienne, I know so well your faculty for discovering the 'silver lining.' But I must acknowledge that I find it difficult to smile when I am parting from a dear friend, with so vague a prospect of meeting again."

"I am certain, Kittie, there is no way but to run the race before us to the fulfilment of our destiny as cheerfully as possible," was Adrienne's practical answer, though a veiled sadness was in her eyes. But the ready protest on Kittie's lips being cut short by the moving carriage, Adrienne scarcely had time to wave a tender, smiling adieu to her weeping friend, when, by a sudden turn in the street, it disappeared from sight.

Adrienne sank back on the carriage seat, heaving a deep sigh, as she gave herself up to a moment of reverie. "Ah," was her thought, "I have started out at last on the road that will finally lead to my father, and though the way

may be long, and perhaps beset with difficulties and delays, I am resolved to press on, letting nothing hold me back until I reach his loving arms."

CHAPTER III

At length, after hours of tedious travel over a rough road, the train steamed into the noisy depot at the city of New Orleans. Adrienne, who kept her seat until the rush of departing passengers had subsided somewhat, all at once observed approaching a soldier in the uniform of an officer, whose roving glance over the passing crowd soon wandered to her smiling eyes. For, though he had grown into stalwart manhood since their last meeting, she had not failed readily to recognize him, and springing to her feet with out-stretched hand, she cried,

“Charles, is it really you?”

His face lighted up with an eager smile as he made his way to her, taking her hand in his own, and regarding her features with a warm admiring gaze as he said,

“And you are Adrienne, who left us a little girl seven years ago. But the only familiar feature I find in so grown-up a young lady is the bright welcome in the same great dark eyes of your childhood.”

“Have I indeed changed so much?” and she laughed delightfully as she ran her amused eyes over his smart uniform. “But, Charles,

though I knew *you* at a glance, I must admit your transformation in this regalia is simply marvelous, not to say anything of the change in your appearance in other respects, since we parted seven years ago. And do you know, I have experienced no small amount of curiosity in regard to your mother having consented that you should join the army."

"But she has never consented," was the grave response, "nor can she be induced to allude to the subject; concluding, I suppose, since employing a substitute would not be compatible with her idea of patriotic principles, there is no help for it; and very soon, Adrienne, I shall have to resign my place at my mother's side, and go forth in the discharge of duty into new and strange paths. But the assurance that you are with her will indeed be comforting to me in my absence, whether in tent or upon the battle-field." His eyes, as he spoke, were bent upon the lovely face of the girl at his side, whose quick look of concern up into his grave face told of the great sympathy she held in her heart for him.

"You know, Charles, that however anxious I am to do all I can for my guardian, I shall not be able to fill *your* place in any sense of the word."

"Nevertheless, I am confident of happy results. And if mother can succeed in maintain-

ing this apparent tranquil frame of mind I shall be able to leave for Virginia with at least some degree of self-command." Having reached the carriage during these remarks, Charles now placed Adrienne on the back seat, following and taking the seat beside her. But during their transit between the depot and Mrs. Somers's residence, the girl, now conscious of feeling utterly worn out, pressed her aching head against the cushioned back of the carriage, closing her eyes, when presently Charles turned and addressed her.

"By the way, Adrienne, I must not forget to mention that we are expecting guests at the house this evening, several of whom, knowing you are to arrive, are looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you."

She raised her head with a tired little shake, but her eyes brightened as she said,

"There is nothing, I am sure, that would give me more pleasure than meeting your friends; but I shall have to own that I prefer a little rest to anything this evening."

Charles meditated a jocose reply, but stooping and scanning the girl's face, now looking so white by the light of passing street lamps, changed his mind, and said gravely,

"As you *are* looking a trifle fagged, Adrienne, I shall see to it that you are allowed to pass unmolested up to your room, shut your-

self in, and resign your body and mind to the so much needed rest."

"You are thoughtful, and I thank you," she said, with a quick smile into his eyes.

This moment, the carriage drawing up in front of a brightly lighted residence, Charles promptly assisting Adrienne out, led the way up the steps to the entrance and rang the bell. The door suddenly opened and Mrs. Somers in person stood before them. Adrienne seized her hands.

"This is pleasant, indeed!" said she. "I never would have known you, Adrienne!" and she took the girl affectionately into her arms, and kissed her tenderly. Then drawing her under the hall light, proceeded to regard the beautiful face with pleasure and interest, the girl herself feeling rather embarrassed under so much profound, eager scrutiny.

"Naturally," she replied, the low, sweet voice delighting her guardian, "the lapse of seven years would bring about a change in a growing girl. But, Mrs. Somers, I am truly glad to find *you* the same. Your brow is every whit as smooth as I remember, when a child, to have noticed it, and your eyes have the same flash of vigorous thought—" But here the words were arrested upon her lips by a ripple of merry laughter coming from the direction of the par-

lors, when Mrs. Somers, turning hurriedly to Charles, said,

"Sure enough, my son, our guests are all here, and among them is Belle Conrad. And as we must attend to our duties, I will insist, Adrienne, that you go to your room at once, for I know you are very tired."

"Yes, Adrienne," laughed Charles, "you certainly have quite a dilapidated look. So I am sure the bed is the best place for you."

"Here, Marie," Mrs. Somers said to the maid this moment passing through the hall, "show Miss de Courcelles to her room. I hope you will pardon my not going with you, Adrienne. Be sure and bring the roses in your cheeks when you come down in the morning. Good-night, child; Marie will see to all your wants. Come, Charles," and as they moved away in the direction of the parlors, Adrienne turned and followed the French maid up the long stairway to her room, which she found so lovely, airy, and soothing to her tired senses that, with a sigh of relief, she began to prepare for bed, and was soon lying among dainty pillows sleeping peacefully as a little child, unconscious of the sounds of gaiety floating up to her room from the parlors below.

CHAPTER IV

Adrienne made a tardy entrance into the breakfast-room the next morning, a little pale perhaps, but wonderfully lovely. Charles, who had finished the meal, and had turned aside scanning the morning paper, greeted her with a cordial smile, coming forward to meet her, and saying, with hearty cheerfulness as he led her to the table and placed her in a chair,

"I judge by the brightness on your face, Adrienne, that the goddess of sleep was not wooed in vain. I am truly glad you escaped the bustle that seems always to attend even so small a gathering."

"You are very flattering," she laughed, "if you would insinuate that I have nerves of a rheumatic, and would be morbidly sensitive to the sound of a little merriment. On the contrary, I was oblivious to everything until the break of day, and this morning find myself fully restored and in my right mind."

"But, do you know, my child," Mrs. Somers interrupted, as she busied herself pouring out a cup of coffee for Adrienne, "I have just been lamenting to Charles that you have forfeited a diploma by leaving school so early."

Adrienne suppressed an open smile at this, as she turned to her guardian and said with amusement in her eyes, but indifference in her voice,

"I am sure my future welfare and happiness will not be materially injured by the loss, and hope you will not think me odd if I frankly confess that I have given the matter very little thought. For what, indeed, does the mere *form* of graduating signify?"

"You surprise me, Adrienne," said Charles, shrugging his shoulders, while a quizzical smile played at the corners of his mouth. "And certainly you are unlike other girls, who are delighted at drawing public notice and applause upon their personal attractions, as well as their intellectual attainments."

She glanced up quickly, with a laugh in her lovely eyes as she answered,

"Never fear, Charles, that I am an exception to the majority of giddy girls who are flattered by commendation and applause, nor do I claim indifference to striking effect in the sense to which you allude. But, pardon me, I should so much like to know something of the doings of the city under the present military regime?"

"As a matter of fact, Adrienne"—he paused, looking down upon the bright face with a smile—"the city, socially, is topsy-turvy. But I

know so little of what is going on outside. I am not prepared to give you the desired information. Of one thing, however, I am ready to assure you of my own command, that our display of regimentals on the parade ground never fails to call forth from the New Orleans circle a number of the gay and fashionable. All of which, should you feel disposed to accompany me this afternoon, may give you pleasure to see."

"Oh, I should be so pleased," she said, in accents attesting her delight at his proposal.

"All right," was the hearty rejoinder, "then I shall be on hand in time to take quite a drive before the dinner hour. But as I am now due at camp, I must be off. Remember, Adrienne," he called out as he hurried from the room, "I shall be here promptly at the appointed time. Au revoir."

"I trust, Adrienne," said Mrs. Somers, as the door closed behind Charles, now giving the opportunity for which the girl had been wishing so much, "the sudden summons home was not a shock to you. I thought you would understand that it was caused by the uproar and excitement in our land, which decided me to bring you away from school before the situation should grow too serious."

"It is no doubt for the best. But, do you know," she said, slowly and dejectedly, her voice trembling under restrained emotion, "this trouble in our country has a sorrowful meaning for *me*. For I indeed realize how fruitless any attempt would be from my father to reach me, and I am bitterly disappointed."

"Really, Adrienne," Mrs. Somers answered, much moved with pity and kindness at the girl's keen distress, "I cannot say how much I sympathize with you, and am glad you have made up your mind to speak of your father, as it will be a relief to you and will do you good. But I advise you not to fret and grow melancholy over circumstances that are a little discouraging, I admit, but feel nevertheless matters will regulate themselves in time, while this trouble between the North and South will soon blow over. Meantime, my child, you should consider the pleasure and comfort you will be to me, until your father shall take you away to his distant home in the East, where, I am certain, he intends residing permanently. Consequently, we may never expect you to return and be one of us again."

At this moment, however, there was a sudden check to the conversation, as Hans, the man servant, opened the door and announced "Mrs. Vincent." Mrs. Somers, rising at once,

and moving forward, greeted her guest most cordially, then turned to Adrienne. "Mrs. Vincent, this is my ward, Adrienne de Courcelles, of whom you have often heard me speak."

"I can't say how pleased I am to meet you, Miss de Courcelles," the light of pleasure and admiration shining in her eyes as she bent them upon the girl, at the same time pressing her hand warmly. As they were seating themselves, talking pleasantly together, Mrs. Vincent said,

"I must explain, Mrs. Somers, having only a moment to spare, that my informal call this morning is prompted by my desire to meet and invite your ward in person to a reception at my house Thursday evening next, given in honor of all my young New Orleans acquaintances, among whom, Miss Adrienne," now smiling sweetly upon the girl, "I am anxious to include *you*. And as you have Captain Somers, who will take great delight in escorting you, besides there will be no opposition from your guardian, I shall not expect a refusal."

"On the contrary," returned Adrienne, in tones of girlish candor, pleasure dancing in her eyes, "I shall only be too delighted, and thank you very much."

Now drawing her eyes slowly away from Adrienne's beautiful face, Mrs. Vincent remarked,

"I can imagine, Mrs. Somers, since it has been my misfortune to be shut out from returning to my home in Washington City, what a relief it must be, during all this tumult and confusion of war, to have your ward away from a distant boarding-school. I little thought when I came to New Orleans for the benefit of a mild winter, such an unpleasant delay was in store for me. But I am philosophical, by nature, and thinking it wise to yield gracefully to the inevitable, I am not spending my time bemoaning my fate. I am sorry indeed, ladies, to tear myself away from your good company, but as I have started out this morning with every hour engaged, I shall really have to take my departure and hurry on. We will soon meet again. Adieu."

When the carriage rolled away from the door, Adrienne sat a moment, with a look of dreamy thoughtfulness in her eyes, thinking of the dignified repose in Mrs. Vincent's bearing, and the charm of her fascinating face. Then remembering her promise to Kittie, that she would write her immediately upon her arrival home, ran up to her room, and soon, with flying pen, was giving a graphic account, for Kit-

tie's amusement, of some of her experiences on her way down to the city, not forgetting to mention, at the close, the delightful drive with Charles she had in anticipation that very afternoon to see her first field drill.

CHAPTER V

True to his appointment, Charles, looking spick-and-span in his uniform, drove up in an open Victoria. Seeing Adrienne already seated in the cool shade of the veranda, looking lovely in her dainty, beautiful dress, swinging down from the carriage and coming quickly up to her, he said, in laughing tones,

"To the minute, Miss de Courcelles. This *is* punctuality indeed."

She rose to her feet, with a ripple of humor in her eyes, as the ready retort came from her lips,

"My punctuality being simply in accordance with Captain Somers's express request upon leaving the house this morning, I can't see why it should be so great a surprise. I am sure I could not afford to delay our first engagement."

"I hope Miss de Courcelles will allow me to say," bowing apologetically, "That I think she has set a worthy example to her charming sisters, who rarely practice the virtue, preferring rather to regard it a trait of minor consideration, and very little worth their while to cultivate."

"Ah," she answered, turning her eyes on him full of smiling irony, "I must confess to have been taken altogether unawares by Captain Somers's flattering opinion of my charming sisters."

"I must apologize again, for words that seem to have so rudely offended Miss de Courcelles's sensitive ear," he laughed genially, "and will suggest, as time waits for no man, the propriety of starting out on our drive. It is now five o'clock to the minute," turning the face of his watch toward her for inspection. "I regret to say that our road, at this angle of the blazing sun, does not lead through the sweetly smelling country, nor does it pass beneath the edges of shady woods. But we shall have protection part of the way at least under the shadow of tall buildings."

They started off in hilarious spirits, Adrienne the while laughing merrily over Charles's frequent gay sallies. But the carriage, presently turning aside from the crowded part of the city, was rolling slowly down the street leading beside the river front, when Charles suddenly called Adrienne's attention to a beautiful vessel, all white and gold, lying anchored some distance out on the calm unruffled water. The sailors standing round in groups on the decks, uniformed in white, their caps ornamented

with gold bands, added an indescribable grace and beauty to the picture, upon which the girl gazed in silent delight.

"What kind of craft is it, Charles?" she asked directly, with a little catch in her voice.

"See, Adrienne," he returned, "the British colors flying from the foremast? It is an English yacht. Mr. Strafford, with whom I am acquainted, accompanies his ship. He is on a pleasure cruise and has been anchored in our port quite awhile. Judging by the length of his stay, he must have found something of interest to detain him. Ah, there he is now, coming ashore."

Turning her eyes in the direction indicated by Charles, she saw a small white boat rapidly nearing the landing, soon disembarking its one passenger, whom she discovered, as he crossed over to the waiting carriage, in which he took his seat and was whirled away, was of eminently distinguished bearing, tall and erect.

"Do you know, Adrienne," presently said Charles, with a gleam of irony in his eyes, giving his usual short laugh, "I am just reminded of the fact that the present war excitement is surely an impediment in the way of this Englishman becoming the celebrity our gay-plumaged society birds have conspired to make him, so evident is the flutter of their brilliant

wings, if perchance a glance from his Highness should fall on them. Young ladies—is it not so?—in the matter of a sensation are proverbially gregarious.”

“Have a care, Charles,” she said, flashing on him a look of laughing rebuke. “I find that it is well for my peace of mind there is a tacit agreement between you and me to approach this subject very gingerly.”

“I crave your pardon,” throwing her a look tinged with raillery, “and beg of you—with a promise never to repeat the blunder—to bear with me this time.”

They were now progressing rapidly over a hot, dusty highway, exposed to the piercing rays of the afternoon sun, which Adrienne managed to partially ward off by the gossamer protection of her delicate lace sunshade. On turning aside at last into an opening over which the entire stretch for miles seemed covered with soldiers’ tents, Adrienne soon forgot, in contemplating the novelty of the scene before her eyes, the uncomfortable drive. The field was occupied by several artillery companies, engaged in going through the maneuvers of the drill in obedience to clarion notes of command ringing out on the rich glory of the brilliant summer afternoon, filling her soul with a deeper glow of patriotic fervor, as she began to

realize why brave men fearlessly face danger, and nobly sacrifice their lives for what they deem the Cause of Right. But the thought suddenly springing into her mind that she could claim neither father, brother, nor any other kindred in ranks, brought with it a sense of isolation that saddened her spirits, and settled her features into a gravity and sadness infinitely touching. The next moment, allowing her eyes to wander slowly down the long line of visiting carriages drawn up within the enclosure, filled with the elite of the Crescent City,—with young ladies whose faces were alight with bright expectant smiles,—all at once her glance fell upon the familiar face of Mrs. Vincent, who sat, in company with a beautiful blond young lady, in one of the most elegant equipages present. Adrienne felt irresistibly drawn toward the wonderful beauty of this fair yet disdainful-looking young lady, and gazed upon her precisely as she would have regarded an exquisite ideal “head” from under the creative brush of some famous artist. And so absorbed was she in her silent occupation that to Charles, who had been trying to get her attention, she scarcely gave heed.

“See, Adrienne,” he persisted, “the officer in command this afternoon is Major Winthrop, a brave soldier, who will early win distinction,

which to my mind (though it is said he is an all-round society man, and a favorite with the ladies) is the most important and attractive of his characteristics. But I feel for him at present the sincerest commiseration in that he is suffering from the pangs of unrequited love, of which Miss Belle Conrad is the object. Yet it seems strange indeed that he should not have so profited by observation as to have spared his pride at least the mortification of such a tumble."

"Is it not so, Charles, that in a similar situation *you* would have done the profiting?" said Adrienne, glancing into his face with a breezy little smile. "But pardon me," she quickly amended, now noting the rush of color over his face, and the shadow that momentarily darkened his eyes. "Your remark is somewhat enigmatical to one who has not the slightest knowledge of the two in question, and now I would suggest that in order to avoid the dust and press of the crowd we should take advantage of the comfort of leaving before it begins to move."

Having recovered himself, Charles readily agreed to this. But the next moment discovered, as they turned into the road skirting the camp, they were not alone in the desire to escape the crowd. An open carriage, in which

a distinguished-looking man was sole occupant, passed them, who, as he lifted his hat to Charles, at the same time riveted his eyes upon Adrienne, calling forth from Charles a short laugh as he turned to the girl and said teasingly,

“His Highness, the Englishman, Adrienne, whose open stare of admiration at *you*, leaving your humble servant altogether out of the question, overstepped the bounds of good breeding. However, as I do not feel in the humor for a weighty discussion, I am disposed to pass the matter over lightly.”

But there being no response to this little piece of satire,—the girl having turned her face away, eagerly watching the flying objects by the roadside,—the irrepressible Charles began to descant volubly upon the merits and charms of his many lady acquaintances, among whom Mrs. Vincent was prominent in her share of admiration and praise, Adrienne listening dreamily as they bowled along through the sweetly scented air, over the beautiful shell road toward the city. But turning, directly, she said in a deprecating way,

“My acquaintance with Mrs. Vincent is very slight indeed, but I had fancied her different from what you are pleased to term her devotion to fashionable circles. She impressed me as one whose pleasures and pursuits are of the

more highly intellectual—far above the aspirations of a mere worldling.”

“For the life of me, Adrienne,” he said, with droll assumption of seriousness, “I can’t imagine wherein one’s partiality for fashionable circles should clash with one’s higher intellectual training, or even spiritual pursuits. With your sober ideas of life, how do you propose employing your time from day to day? But instead of trying to grapple something beyond your reach, causing you to grow old before your time, I would advise you to cultivate a taste for the ‘giddy whirl,’ and laugh while you may.”

“Alas, Charles,” she said, while an odd little smile played over her features, “my only purpose in life, which supersedes everything else to me, is to press forward on the road that will take me to my father. Nevertheless, I thank you for the concern you so flatteringly manifest on my behalf, and for the earnest suggestions you have offered with so much wisdom and consideration, and promise you—my nature not in the least inclined to the ascetic—the world is sufficiently luring to prevent my ever making a nun of myself.”

“For which,” in comic tones of relief, “I am devoutly thankful. But here we are at the house. By the way, Adrienne,” now lifting her

from the carriage with care, "please say to mother that I am detailed on special duty this evening, therefore will not be able to dine at home as I had promised. Au revoir," and springing back into the carriage, he was soon out of sight, while Adrienne, now standing alone on the sidewalk, turned and slowly walked into the house with a preoccupied air, and something like moisture in her dark eyes.

CHAPTER VI

Recently released from monotonous routine of school days, naturally Adrienne found, among the large circle of acquaintances and friends that frequented Mrs. Somers's hospitable residence, very pleasant resource. But as she struggled daily to subdue the ever-increasing desire for definite tidings from her father, she had not settled upon any plan for the future. Meanwhile, a long, irregular letter from Kittie, despite the fact it was burdened with complaints from beginning to end, had given her genuine pleasure. Kittie declared that since Adrienne's departure the college had grown so insupportable, she had concluded to put her firm resolution to go home into immediate effect, and within the limit of a few hours would be going on her way rejoicing. Adrienne sighed. As a matter of fact, this letter having brought to mind so vivid a recollection of her merry friend Kittie, that in the evening, finding herself a strange guest in the midst of the gay, buzzing, fashionable throng that filled to overflowing Mrs. Vincent's brilliant parlors, looking round upon the lovely picture made by the beautiful women in gleaming silken dresses ornamented

with flashing jewels, and listening to the charming ripples of laughter floating out on the perfume-laden air, her thoughts naturally flew back to the gay, pleasure-loving Kittie, who would have been in raptures over a scene so fascinating and delightful. There was a wistfulness in the girl's eyes that touched Charles, and surmising the cause he managed to draw her on through the exquisitely decorated rooms. As they conversed in low tones, the delicate fragrance from a profusion of flowers, entrancing strains of music coming from an invisible orchestra, all conspired to smooth her spirits into a sensation of dreamy delight. But presently they were compelled to halt, being wedged into a corner, opposite another couple, by the passing crowd. Facing this couple, both of whom bowed smilingly to Charles, he turned quickly to Adrienne, and said,

"Adrienne, allow me to introduce Miss Conrad and Mr. Strafford—Miss de Courcelles, my mother's ward."

With one comprehensive glance, Adrienne knew the Englishman, and bowed gracefully, with a deeper color than usual on her cheek. But recognizing at once in Miss Conrad the beautiful blond who had attracted her so unexplainably, whom she had seen in company with

Mrs. Vincent on the parade ground, she flushed slightly under the scrutiny, bowing gracefully to the well-bred stare with which Miss Conrad saw fit to favor her. After a mutual exchange of courtesies, however, they drifted apart, Charles and Adrienne passing out on the sidewalk toward home, while the beautiful fair-faced woman and stately Englishman continued on their way down the crowded hall, talking freely, when suddenly looking up into the face of her escort Miss Conrad idly remarked,

“Mr. Strafford, did you not observe how very foreign in air and look was the young girl with Charlie Somers? Or were you so dazzled by the sunshine of her smile that you did not notice?”

“Unquestionably,” he replied, “the rich magnolia tint of the young lady’s complexion, the lovely dreamy eyes, and dusky hair, would proclaim her foreign descent.”

“Ah,” she said, half-laughing, “are you not a close observer to have noticed as much in so short a time?”

“Pardon me, but I will say that I have had the pleasure of seeing the young lady in question once before this evening. Nevertheless, I am sure the unusual type of her beauty could not fail to attract in any crowd even the passing notice of an entire stranger,” was the deliberate

answer, an amused smile hovering upon his handsome mouth, which, however, now looking down, she did not seem to see. She laughed again lightly, and proceeded to change the conversation into a channel of more interest to herself, moving with ease from one subject to another, keeping up a lively chat as she occasionally wove into her sentences morsels of delicate, sparkling wit.

In the mean time, Charles and Adrienne had been walking some little distance through the quiet streets, when the girl suddenly addressed him.

"You must not think me silly, Charles, if I acknowledge that I have great curiosity to know something of this Miss Conrad to whom you have just introduced me."

"And I am able to gratify your curiosity only in so far that I can assure you of her nativity as a Virginian, of one of the most prominent families in the State, at present visiting a bachelor uncle, her father's brother, who is living to himself in his lovely home in this city. I am sure you think her beautiful?"

"*Very,*" emphasized Adrienne, "yet she seems cold and disdainful."

"Precisely, you have struck the keynote to her nature," a quick, short laugh following the sentence, though the hot flush that spread over

his face, but for the friendly shades of night, would have openly revealed the state of his heart to the girl's observing eyes.

"But, Charles," she answered dryly, "after a little reflection it does seem that we should be more inclined to the charitable, and less critical in our thoughts and remarks."

"I am not uncharitable, at all events," he laughed, with a slight tinge of bitterness in his tone, "when I say the young lady's manner toward the Englishman is sufficiently transparent to admit of no misrepresentation."

"Charles," she asked, laughing, "do I not detect a vein of satire running through your velvety tones?"

"You have discovered possibly the rooted prejudice of a commoner toward the aristocracy," said he, with a short, sarcastic laugh.

"How absurd and ridiculous you grow, Charles, and what a waste of words. Let us get back to something sensible."

"With all my heart. By the way, Adrienne, I must not forget to disclose the important fact that I have in my possession several invitations to distribute, one each for mother and yourself, to an entertainment given by Mr. Strafford on his yacht, under the auspices of Mrs. Vincent (who, it seems, is an acquaintance of several seasons' standing) shortly before the day fixed

for his departure from port, in compliment to the uptown ladies, who have received and treated him with so much hospitality. The usual programme—music, dancing, moonlight promenades on deck, etc.—will be the order of the evening. And I would add, with your permission, that Miss Conrad doubtless is indulging delightful anticipations of the coming event.”

“Which is all a fanciful idea of your own, Charles, though,” a sudden luminous smile lighting up her face, “it is not to be denied there is sufficient attraction to suggest the indulgence.” And now saying “good-night,” for they had reached the entrance at home, she ran swiftly up the steps, and vanished through the front door before Charles could frame a reply. Staring after her he wondered in his own mind if so dainty a piece of femininity could really be intentionally rude. The laugh was still on Adrienne’s face as she ran lightly up to her room, but she soon sank, tired and sleepy, on her bed, at once blissfully unconscious of the worries that beset her waking moments and shadowed her life from day to day.

At the same time, only a few blocks away, Miss Conrad and Mr. Strafford were standing in front of her own door, the hall light now

shedding its mellow rays down upon their faces as she asserted,

"Yes, Mr. Strafford, I have always thought it natural a stranger from abroad should be an interesting personage, and hope you will not think me aggressively curious in wishing to know your opinion of us on this side of the Atlantic—of our country at this particular crisis."

"I am willing, Miss Conrad, to freely acknowledge that the independent spirit I have found prevailing in the Southern States is utterly at variance with the set rules which have controlled my life hitherto. But, since I have breathed, if I may so express myself, the sentiments of its people, I have grown to admire your country so genuinely that I would fain adopt its principles as my own."

"Ah," she interrupted impulsively, "perhaps we may yet hear of you enlisting in our cause to help us in dire emergency."

He shrugged his shoulders as he answered gravely,

"The present outlook of your country, Miss Conrad, is indeed sad to contemplate. The voice of liberty so dearly bought by the American people will soon be drowned in the confusion of the approaching contest. For in this unfortunate division, or separation of the

States, the Confederates have on their shoulders a colossal undertaking, while the opposing section, in numbers, influence, open seas, and the accompanying prestige of sailing under the stars and stripes, stands out pre-eminently on the vantage ground. But I will say good-night, as I have already detained you too long in the damp air." And with an imperial bow Mr. Strafford walked out to the waiting carriage, while as it rolled rapidly on its way down the street the young lady stood with eyes bent upon the vanishing vehicle, murmuring to herself, with considerable chagrin, "After all, his eagerly sought for opinion was anything but clearly defined, while I am impressed with the thought, that no matter how genial he tries to be, there is a certain exclusiveness in his bearing that is more in keeping with the etiquette of a European court than our American customs and unconventionalism.

CHAPTER VII

"What a lovely Sabbath morning!" Adrienne exclaimed aloud as she drew aside the lace curtains at her window and peeped up into the deep blue summer sky now dotted over by a few fleecy clouds floating lazily in the distance like small white-winged ships, while as she breathed the fragrance of tea roses from the trellis below there was an added thrill of delight running through her entire being.

Resolving at once that she would take a stroll in the beauty of the morning hours, she announced her intention at the breakfast table of attending service at Trinity Church. Mrs. Somers readily agreed, adding,

"The singing is the attraction, I suppose, Adrienne. It is very fine I am told, and you will hear an eloquent sermon. But as I have always made it a rule never to leave my own church at regular service, I shall have to forego the pleasure of accompanying you."

"Ah, Mrs. Somers," the girl said quickly, in a tone of apology, "please allow me to go with you. For I am sure I shall be quite as highly entertained."

"By no means must you think of changing your plans for the day, when you can go with me any other time, and as often as you like," was the reassuring reply.

So at half past ten o'clock, Charles not yet having put in an appearance from camp, Adrienne started alone to church. She was becomingly dressed in smoke gray, of rich material, hat and gloves corresponding in color and effect. She moved lightly along, her heart warming under the influence of the sunshine, while in the gardens she passed on her way brilliant winged butterflies whirled amid the rich colored roses, and on the lovely lawns an army of little birds were twittering among the branches of the trees. "Ah," she sighed, "what magic in nature; how thankful I am for the gift of enjoying it all."

A moment later, as she entered the vestibule of the church, chancing to meet Miss Conrad and Mr. Strafford face to face, who entered by the opposite door, looking up with surprise, she encountered the splendid eyes of the Englishman fixed upon her, who returned her graceful recognition with a courtly bow. Her cheek was flushed with a vivid glow as she turned to follow the usher down the aisle, which gradually faded away under the soul-inspiring voluntary pealing forth from the organ. Kneel-

ing reverently in the pew assigned for her use, the light through a stained window now touching her hair and beautiful figure, she sent up, with deep humility of heart, an earnest petition for guidance and protection, adding a special, supplicating prayer for a speedy reunion with her father. After a while, as she rose, her face was white, but beautiful with a new and tender light.

The singing was all she expected to find—heavenly and uplifting. But the sermon, from the unique text “Remember,” though it was arranged in accordance with the most approved Episcopal orthodoxy, and delivered with impressive earnestness, alas, she found at times quite difficult to follow.

The services over at last, the congregation crowded into the aisles in the usual way, pressing forward to the doors. Mr. Strafford was being carried irresistibly along by the human tide, his eyes alight with expectancy as he flashed them into the pew in which the young girl had sat. But suddenly the eager, hopeful light in them changed to grave disappointment, for he had discovered she had already disappeared among the receding crowd of people. In the mean time, Adrienne had progressed a block or more on the road home, indulging idle dreams as she walked along, the subject of her

thoughts being Mr. Strafford, who, though she was unconscious of it, had interested her from the first. Inexperience being her safeguard, she had not thought of him in the light of a lover. She was thinking of his regal bearing as he had bowed before her in the vestibule of the church, of his singular fascination and distinction of manner, recognizing that beneath all his polish there was a substratum of pride and masterfulness that attracted her irresistibly. But the unbidden thought of Miss Conrad suddenly jingled the harmony of her musings, setting in motion so unpleasant a vibration of the heartstrings that, quickening her pace until she had reached the entrance at home, flying up stairs to her room and closing the door, she proceeded to call herself severely to order. An hour later Adrienne appeared at the dinner table in the presence of guests, with no apparent trace in her white face and composed manner of the conflict so recently ruffling her sensitive nature.

CHAPTER VIII

The evening for Mr. Strafford's entertainment came at last. Adrienne's heart, it must be owned, was all atingle with bright expectation in view of the occasion, the novelty of which was calculated to impress and captivate the spirit and fancy of a romantic young girl. On the stroke of eight o'clock, having finished her toilette, she was turning away from the mirror, when there came a light tap on the door, and Marie entered.

"Mamselle, Madam wishes to see you in the parlor," she said.

"Is she alone, Marie?"

"No, Mamselle, a gentleman, whom I have never seen before, is with her."

Wondering who it could be, she crossed the hall and swept lightly down the stairs. Opening the parlor door, to her surprise she found herself in the presence of Mr. Strafford, seated beside Mrs. Somers engaged in conversation. But as she entered, he rose, with a flash in his eyes, coming forward to meet her, handsome and distinguished looking. Adrienne's cheeks flushed as she gave her hand into his a moment, but bending her head slightly, passed on to the

window and stood looking out into the street, thus leaving him to return to Mrs. Somers and finish the conversation which evidently had been interrupted by her sudden entrance.

"So, Mr. Strafford," Mrs. Somers continued, "you have come to escort us in Charles's place this evening. It is kind of you, I am sure."

"I shall deem it a great privilege if you ladies will grant me so much pleasure," he answered smilingly, in his most suave manner.

"Adrienne," Mrs. Somers said to the girl, who turned at once facing them, "you have heard Mr. Strafford's kind offer to escort us in Charles's place this evening. He has been detained in camp until quite too late to accompany us."

The girl's dark eyes were now turned upon Mr. Strafford with a sunny, assenting smile, as she inclined her figure with incomparable grace. He felt unexplainably influenced by the magnetism of her exquisite personality as he looked upon the charming face, the slender lissome figure beautifully gowned in filmy white, worn over white silk, her only ornament a cluster of delicate pink tea roses fastened at her belt. At this point the appearance of Marie in the doorway, bearing on her arm the ladies' wraps, was the signal to start, and the next moment they were speeding swiftly toward the river. Mr.

Strafford, who occupied the opposite seat in the carriage, was soon engaged in animated conversation with Mrs. Somers, in which at first Adrienne took no part, though something of what they were saying occasionally caught her ear, particularly a fragment of the last sentence.

"The Southerners," Mr. Strafford was saying, "give a striking illustration of their patriotic timber by the go-ahead activity and enthusiasm with which they rush into matters."

"I have long since found out," Mrs. Somers interrupted energetically, "that to accomplish anything in this life one's heart and will must be deeply interested and engrossed in the work in hand. Our whole souls, as you may imagine, are absorbed in the success of our cause, and though our reward may prove only the down-fall of our cherished hopes, we nevertheless shall have full consciousness of having been loyal to duty. By the way, Adrienne," she said to the girl, who sat gazing abstractedly out of the carriage window, "notwithstanding the fact that you have ever regarded the North as your native place, where you would be perhaps at the present moment could your father have reached you in time, I have taken for granted you are with us in this struggle."

She looked up quickly, and surprising by the light of passing street lamps an intent though

amused glance from Mr. Strafford, a smile flickered in her eyes as she answered promptly,

"I am certain, should my sentiments incline me ever so much toward the opposing cause, that in my present position as the exception among so many ardent Southern supporters, I should hesitate to express myself."

"Then it is from prudential considerations Miss de Courcelles prefers to withhold a declaration of her sentiments on the question. Is it not so?" said Mr. Strafford, laughing, and shrugging his shoulders lightly.

The girl flushed proudly under his amused gaze.

"On the contrary," she hastened to say, "I will cheerfully acknowledge, that however much I may deplore the South having been rushed unprepared into the contest, its position, should it prove a protracted struggle, being indeed serious, I nevertheless am satisfied to have *my* lot thrown in with the rise or fall of its people."

But this moment, the course of conversation being interrupted by the abrupt halting of the carriage, they found they had reached the landing, where a boat, with colored lights suspended fore and aft, was in waiting, attended by two sailors in picturesque yacht uniform. While, lying some distance out from shore, a brilliantly illuminated ship was sending lines

of light in every direction across the smooth surface of the water.

"How lovely!" exclaimed the girl in genuine tones of delight. "Do you suppose, Mr. Strafford," looking up into his face with a charming little smile, "it is a thing of magic that will vanish at our approach?"

"By no means, Miss de Courcelles," laughing lightly, as he bent his handsome head so that he might more plainly see the radiant upturned face. "I am sure it is better as you see it. Distance, you know, often lends enchantment to the view."

Mr. Strafford proceeded at once to arrange for the comfort of the ladies on a cushioned seat in the boat, and placing himself on a seat opposite them, gave the signal to start. They were pushing off from shore, when the distant roll of drums in the city reached their ears.

"Alas! that sound, and all it suggests," breathed Adrienne in low tones, "is in appalling contrast to the lovely scene before us."

"Yes," said Mr. Strafford, reflectively, "it is true, these dreaded war agitations not only oppose the doctrine of peace, but effectually destroy the beauty and harmony of society."

"Yet," answered the girl, with an upward glance into his face, "does not all history prove that a crisis is sure to come in the affairs of every country, which alone can be settled by

sacrifice of blood? But the wonder is, that in gravest perils we can engage in most trivial matters. Certainly we are happily constituted."

"Which proves that it is wise not to worry, but leave everything in the hands of a Judge who is the arbiter of nations," said Mr. Strafford, with conviction.

"Allow me to suggest," Mrs. Somers interrupted with a slight tremor in her voice, "that as we are out strictly to enjoy ourselves this evening, we leave the gruesome topic of war out of the question for the present."

Adrienne suddenly bowed her head, and sat quite still, and a marked silence fell on them. But after a moment of suspense, relief came in the usual calm, self-composed tones of Mr. Strafford's voice addressing Mrs. Somers in his usual deferential manner. Adrienne sighed as she leaned forward to catch the sweet strains of music floating out to them from the dazzling splendor of the illuminated yacht, upon whose decks presently she descried several officers grouped together chatting and smoking.

Mrs. Vincent, the gracious dispenser of hospitality, was soon welcoming them most cordially. The scene that met their eyes was a dream of delight, rendered so by the profusion of flowers distributed in every direction in every nook and corner, and by the handsomely gowned ladies and distinguished-looking

soldiers. Nevertheless, Mr. Strafford's coming did not fail to create considerable stir among the bevy of pretty girls. Miss Conrad, now all beaming smiles, was conscious of every glance from his eye. Even the light that flashed over his features if perchance he met Adrienne, was faithfully chronicled upon the tablets of her memory. Apparently, as the evening progressed, every one was in a transport of mirth and happiness, yet Adrienne, whose pleasure was dampened by a vague feeling of unrest, scarcely repressed the conviction of coming trouble.

The hours were drifting to a close when Mr. Strafford sought the fulfilment of Adrienne's promise to him for the last dance. He had watched the preoccupied look on the girl's face, the shadow that seemed to darken the fascinating, dreamy eyes, and ventured to say, as he came up to her,

"I am thinking you are surfeited with all this, and are wishing yourself safely out of it."

She looked up with a quick smile, replying,

"Not this moment, I assure you, as I look upon the swaying figures to soft strains of music. Oh! how I love music, that seems to have been created for my own unspeakable delight."

The second's silence was broken by the crash of the orchestra, and the next moment they

were moving with inimitable grace to the perfect time of the music, the observed of all eyes. Mr. Strafford, his heart throbbing with happiness akin to pain, felt that the entire pleasure of the evening was centered in this, the last waltz. But when the move was made at last to disperse, Adrienne was sensibly relieved, though down in the deep recesses of her soul she knew that no matter what the future might have in store for her, this evening in all its glow and beauty would ever remain in her mind, the brightest and most vivid of her recollections.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Somers had wakened to the fact that Charles had not put in an appearance according to promise, and on account of the defection, Mr. Strafford was gallantly endeavoring to soothe her manifest worry and distress. Quick to detect the note of constraint in his voice, however, Adrienne also began to feel excessively uneasy at Charles's unexplained absence. They were standing ready to start, waiting Mr. Strafford's return, who had been absent a moment, when, to Adrienne's surprise, she saw him coming forward with Miss Conrad by his side, whose face, with the exception of the disdainful curve of the lips, was entirely impassive, and her manner stiff and unresponsive. Mr. Strafford, however, as he promptly took charge of Mrs. Somers, politely requested the young ladies to follow as he led the way,

with which they complied, neither speaking as they walked side by side to the waiting boat, which, with its human cargo, soon shot out on the quiet water in the fresh tropical breeze, the silvery moonlight falling round them like a halo. Adrienne, giving no outward expression of the subtle delight that swelled her heart, sat with uplifted face, full of rapture, longing, in the magic, the allurements of the moment, that she might sail on forever. But all at once her romantic imaginings received a sudden jolt by the touch of the keel against the landing, when their ears were saluted by the noisy blast of brass bands parading down the street, followed by a long line of artillery wagons, mounted with heavy cannon, the import of which Mrs. Somers seemed to comprehend at once, as she sat down abruptly upon the nearest seat, throwing out her hands as though to ward off a blow, and inquiring in a nervous manner,

“What is the meaning of this, Mr. Strafford?”

“My dear madam,” he answered gravely, looking down upon her face, “since a moving body of soldiers is an every-day occurrence, why excite yourself so unnecessarily on account of it?”

“Alas,” she said, “I am convinced of how ut-

terly unprepared I am to meet this trouble so near me," a choking sob ending the sentence.

Having observed Mr. Strafford's divided duty, Adrienne ventured to assure him there was no necessity he should accompany them home. He turned to her with a smile.

"I appreciate your effort, Miss de Courcelles, at affording me relief in this little dilemma. I will explain that Miss Conrad's escort having been called away to duty during the early part of the evening, I could not refuse his earnest request to see her home safely. And now, Mrs. Somers," turning to the sad-faced lady, "I will say good-night, hoping your worry may vanish at sight of Captain Somers waiting your return." Then taking Adrienne's hand with a lingering pressure, he spoke a few words at parting, with so tender an inflection in his voice that the bright color came tingling into her cheeks, of which he was not aware, of course, as he closed the door, stepped back and lifted his hat, allowing the carriage to pass swiftly out of sight. He stood a moment with a decided pang of regret tugging at his heart, but turned slowly away and walked the few paces back to Miss Conrad, who evidently waited his coming with ill-concealed impatience, which, engrossed in his own thoughts, he did not seem to see; but sat, as they rolled through the quiet streets, waiting her pleasure to speak.

"Mr. Strafford," at length said she, "I wish to thank you for the lovely entertainment you have so kindly given for our pleasure. I have spent an evening almost perfectly happy."

"The pleasure has been mutual, I assure you, Miss Conrad, the memory of which is indelibly written upon my heart. While my ship has taken additional value to commemorate the event."

"But is it true, Mr. Strafford, you intend leaving New Orleans so early?"

"I am at this hour due at Norfolk, so my early departure from Louisiana's sunny shore is a fact I must bravely stare in the face. Though it seems a paradox that one should be in pursuit of pleasure in a land struggling in the throes of civil war, it would only be right if one would stretch forth a helping hand toward one's suffering neighbors."

"Certainly," she answered, sending a swift side glance into his face, "it is not expected of foreigners to pick up cudgels in our defense."

"Pardon me," now turning the light of his splendid eyes upon hers, "I cannot see the impropriety of meeting the Northerners upon their own ground; for is it not known that foreigners are constantly swelling their ranks?"

"Your opinion, Mr. Strafford, is disinterested, and well meant perhaps," said she in crisp tones, "but I hope indeed we may be able

to pull through the difficulty without having to call on foreign aid. In the mean time, are you not in danger cruising around our coast?"

"We sail under colors friendly alike to North and South. The British flag is the insignia of our protection," he answered promptly, in most courteous tones.

But there was something evidently awry with Miss Conrad, whose usual equipoise threatened to desert her at so critical a moment, a fact upon which, on his way back to the river, Mr. Strafford was disposed to reflect seriously, having felt the flavor of displeasure—notwithstanding the strenuous effort made at repression—that had obviously marked her manner during the evening. But upon reaching the yacht, Mr. Strafford found all traces of the evening's festivity already removed. The only sound breaking the silence aboard ship was the regular step of the guard as he paced his usual rounds.

Hurrying to his pillow, unpleasant conjectures were soon forgotten in sleep. Visions of his lovely guests of the evening floating, as it were, in billows of tulle and lace, soon began to pass in review before his dreaming imagination. But the scene suddenly changed from gilded salons to the darkness of a raging storm on the ocean. Adrienne de Courcelles, her face rigid in pallor as she stood stranded on a rock far out

at sea, looked with strained eyes, amid vivid flashes of lightning and terrific peals of thunder, upon the on-coming waves that were to sweep her off irresistibly into a watery grave. The terror and helplessness of the situation woke him with a shuddering groan, but he had a feeling of glad relief to find it only a hideous dream.

With this phantom of the imagination haunting him, though he would have vigorously discarded the idea that his strong nature was tinged in the smallest degree with superstition, the conviction nevertheless stole upon Mr. Strafford's mind that this charming young girl was threatened by a swiftly approaching calamity. Accordingly, a day or so later, he was found standing in front of the entrance of Mrs. Somers's residence, sending a peal from the bell that roused sluggish Hans out of his afternoon doze, and sent him shambling along to answer the call. But the old darky's eyes opened wide with surprise upon perceiving the caller. Presently collecting his wits he answered coherently the solicitous inquiries after the ladies.

"I am sorry, suh," said Hans, bowing elaborately, "but my mistis is absent at present, with her daughter, Mrs. Richards. Miss Adren, suh, is lef' town, on a visit to my mis-

tis's other daughter who lives a long way up de river on her plantation, suh."

Mr. Strafford turned away at once, disappointed at this assurance from Hans, and strode out to his carriage, his heart filled with agitation and vexation as he sorely puzzled his brain with fruitless speculation over the sudden turn in affairs.

CHAPTER IX

Mrs. Somers and Adrienne found, upon reaching home, Hans waiting to receive them, holding in his hand a sealed envelope, which, as Mrs. Somers passed him by, he gave into her keeping. With a sudden intuition, and unable to resist the thought, smothering a tumult of feeling, Adrienne slipped away to her room, that she might avoid witnessing her guardian's overwhelming grief and distress, and was standing beside the window, lost in sad meditation, when her train of thought was interrupted by Marie's entrance, who approached and silently handed her the letter, which indeed proved a hurried scrawl from Charles announcing his sudden departure with his command for the front in Virginia, which had given him no time to seek and bid them good-by in person. But his written good-by, though infinitely sad, breathed in every line a devotion to the Confederate cause, and a fervid belief in its final victory. Adrienne felt relieved that he had been spared the heart-breaking farewell to his mother.

"Alas! poor Charles," she sighed, his attachment for Miss Conrad, which he had tried faith-

fully to conceal from herself, now coming up vividly before her recollection. Deeply touched she had been by the disaster which had befallen his heart's first true affections, while the noble manner in which he had fought out single-handed the great disappointment of his life, succeeding at last in stemming the tide of misery that threatened to overwhelm and crush out his manliness, appealed to her tender womanly sympathy and warmest admiration.

The following day proved a weary heart lesson in Adrienne's experience, as in the direction of Mrs. Somers's rooms she frequently heard most pitiful moans, coming from the depths of a broken heart. She began to reflect seriously over the blow that had fallen so pitilessly on her guardian's devoted head. While the dismal surroundings of the house so depressed her spirits, she found it pleasant to welcome even Mrs. Richards,—of whose brusque manner she was conscious of having stood in awe,—who came early, and with designs, judging by the length of time she remained closeted in her mother's rooms.

But as Adrienne sat in the lower hall, trying to fasten her thoughts upon an interesting book, Mrs. Richards suddenly appeared before her. Coming forward and taking a seat opposite the girl, she proceeded, without preamble, to say, in a business-like way.

"I have been the last hour trying to convince mother of the folly of running this establishment in her present weak condition of health. I see the necessity of removing her at once to my house, feeling that I, alone, can give her the required nursing and attention. But on *your* account she hesitated decidedly, urging serious objections. But as I had in my power a proposal that would set her fears at rest, she finally gave her consent, provided it should meet with *your* full and free approval. You must remember, Adrienne, once, when you were a small child, to have met my sister Helen,—Mrs. Willesly,—from whom I am in receipt of a letter this morning, making particular inquiries about you, insisting, as she is alone on her plantation, a considerable distance from neighbors (her husband being absent with his command in Virginia), that you must pay her a visit, and come prepared to make a long stay. She is lonely, and *pleads* for your company. I have been thinking, Adrienne, that until mother is better, and it shall be pleasant for you *here* again, perhaps a visit to Helen would prove a most delightful change for you. However, should you prefer remaining in the city, it is unnecessary to say other pleasant arrangements can be made for your pleasure and comfort."

"I understand, Mrs. Richards, the peculiar circumstances which have brought about this

proposal from you, therefore I shall not hesitate to accept the alternative kindly suggested by you."

"I am positive, Adrienne, that in the *end* you *will* thank me." And as she now rose to go, looking down into the girl's sad face, she asked, "Shall I send a message to Helen at once to expect you, and let mother know of your willing consent to my plan?"

"You can say that I *prefer* to go, and can let Mrs. Willesly know at once," was the simple but firm reply.

Mrs. Richards walked briskly down the hall and disappeared through the end door, the girl's eyes following her with a look of evident relief. But now springing to her feet, she ran up to her room, and crossing over to a front window stood watching the hurrying passers in the street, her thoughts busy with the uprising thought, "Was ever a girl more unhappily placed—more completely wrapped in loneliness?" And oppressed by a sense of her helplessness, involuntarily the thought of her father's prolonged absence began to torture her. She was no weakling to crave the sympathy of others, but felt scarcely able to strive against the present emergency in her life.

The next morning Adrienne was not surprised at receiving a summons from her guardian, which she promptly responded to. But

when she had reached the bedside, and her eyes had fallen upon the sudden and marked change in the invalid's face, wrought by the ravages of sorrow, she sank, overwhelmed, upon the nearest seat, and for a moment was unable to frame a sentence on her lips.

"Alas! Adrienne," came in a weak, quavering voice, "I have had my death-blow; but perhaps I have lived long enough. There is no way but to feel resigned to what is beyond one's power to control. But it was not to discuss *this*, however, that I sent for you. While I am yet strong enough I want to say to you how deeply I deplore the way things have turned out. There is some consolation, Adrienne, in knowing you will be pleasantly situated with Helen, who is warm-hearted and gay-spirited, and will thoroughly appreciate you in every sense of the word."

"Dear Mrs. Somers, do not let a thought of *me* worry and distress your mind. I shall be all right, and should the emergency arise, I feel competent to take care of myself. But, as the hour is come when we must be separated indefinitely, may I ask if it will tax your strength too much to give me a very brief statement of the cause of my mother's estrangement from her father, so much so, that her child should be effectually shut out from his sympathy and protection?"

Mrs. Somers regarded the girl's face with a kind smile, and began, with a certain weakness in her voice, to say,

"To make a long story short, Adrienne, the entire trouble grew out of the stern forbidding pride of Mr. Stanley, your grandfather, who is still living, a type of the old Virginian aristocracy. His daughter Grace, your mother, being very beautiful, was much flattered and admired in the stately circle in which she moved. While abroad one season she, with her party, fell in company with some distinguished tourists, of whom Mr. de Courcelles was one of the number. Naturally, as they were thrown together during the entire season, an attachment between Miss Stanley and Mr. de Courcelles was the result of the intimacy. Mr. de Courcelles, following Miss Stanley home, presented himself before her father as a suitor for his daughter's hand. But his proposal was met with so prompt and decided a refusal that, feeling bitterly repulsed and chagrined, he retired precipitately from the field; he taking himself, with his bruised and insulted feelings, to the maelstrom of surging, busy New York. But, as nothing can turn the tide of true love,—it was fate,—Grace, not willing to renounce her foreign lover, managed, by some inexplicable method, to communicate with him, shortly after openly defying her father's wishes and authority by becoming Mr.

de Courcelles's wife, and accordingly was speedily disinherited, a deaf ear being turned to all entreaties for reconciliation. In consequence of your mother's death, which occurred three years following her marriage, your father's health was seriously shaken. My sister, Mrs. Elliott, who was a close friend of your mother, was present at her death, when she took charge of you. On a visit to my sister, three summers later, in New York, I found you, Adrienne, a lovely little girl, and seeing the many demands on my sister's time socially and otherwise, I besought your father to turn you over to me. He consented finally,—knowing he must soon start out upon a prolonged tour through the far East for the restoration of his health,—with the assurance of his gratitude, and satisfaction at having you placed in such kind, responsible hands. Besides, he was pleased at the idea of having you educated in your mother's native land. It was his declared purpose to have been here at the present time, which of course has been prevented by the unfortunate trouble between the North and South. Doubtless he is waiting in New York for an opportunity of seeking his 'little girl,' for as such he seems always to speak of you. A happy future waits you in his congenial companionship, Adrienne, as he is yet quite young to have a grown daughter. You must have known, by the

elaborate provision made always for your pleasure and comfort, that your father is a very rich man. I hope indeed he may be satisfied with your training and education."

"I am satisfied, dear Mrs. Somers. You have been everything to me from my childhood. I can never repay the debt of gratitude I owe you."

"I am not disposed to take much of the credit to myself, my child. For, in one so young, I have rarely met with so much decision of character."

A sudden pallor beginning to settle over Mrs. Somers's face, and her voice faltering from weakness, Adrienne, a little startled, rose to her feet and withdrew quietly from the room. On her way back to her own apartments she dwelt upon the meeting with her father yet in store for her, bringing a light like sunshine into her face, and a radiant gleam of joy into her lovely eyes. "How strange," she mused, "the recital of this sad little history should infuse new life into my veins. But, oh, my grandfather! it is the implacable stubbornness of your will that has marred your otherwise grand character. I indeed shudder when I remember my mother in her last hours should have had to feel the lash of your unyielding treatment."

With Marie's assistance, Adrienne's trunks were soon in readiness for the transfer. As she

waited the moment in which she was to say good-by, and take her departure, there was ample time to reflect that she was leaving New Orleans perhaps never to return. Driven by circumstances over which she had no control to make a change in her life, she devoutly prayed the change might prove pleasant at least—among people of culture and refinement. But suddenly a pained look came into her face as she thought of her recent parting with Mr. Strafford, thinking to meet him so soon again, sending a quiver of despair into her already aching heart; while the thought of going so far away caused her heart to sink as lead within her. “Oh!” she said, “could I but lift the veil from the future, which now seems all chaos to my confused brain, perhaps the sweet hope that it might contain some bright hours to cheer my life would not seem a cruel mockery.”

Marie wept from time to time while getting Adrienne's effects in readiness, and when the boxes were packed and strapped, though the girl herself was so wretched, she tried to soothe and cheer the disconsolate maid with sanguine expressions of the hope they would all be gathered again under the same roof.

“For, Marie,” she added, “I am not disposed to harbor the thought of my guardian not being able to rally and grow strong again.”

“Alas! Mamselle,” with a sigh, and dolorous shake of the head, accompanied with the inevitable French shrug, “my heart indeed very much forebode me, that there no hope is for poor Madame.”

CHAPTER X

Early in the morning, after a long journey through the night, Adrienne found herself standing alone on the platform of a country depot, with no other habitation in sight. Nothing could surpass the loneliness of the scene, accordingly her spirits sank low, wondering within herself if this dismal spot was but the beginning of what her life must be perhaps for months to come. Groaning inwardly, her thoughts flew back to the sunny, pleasure-loving flower-scented city she had just left behind. And impelled by a tender, yearning, homesick feeling, she turned in time to catch through the blur of tears the last glimpse of the fast receding train as it swept round a curve and vanished from sight. She was making every effort to overcome her agitation, when a boy, carelessly whistling, came along, who, as he shot a look into the girl's tear-stained eyes, stopped abruptly, offering, from sheer sympathy, to conduct her to a hotel. Accepting with a bow of glad assent, she followed as he piloted her through a densely wooded region, a few steps beyond which she was let into an unpretending country hotel. She was very much surprised as

she glanced around, to find so much neatness and order in the appointments of the place. The proprietor came hurrying forward, and when Adrienne had made known her wants, with the assurance of doing all in his power for her accommodation, taking his hat from a nail in the wall, he hurried out in search of the carriage Adrienne had been informed would be waiting her arrival without fail. She had not long to wait, for after a light breakfast, as she stood at the front door watching eagerly for the coming carriage, to her delight she descried it at a distance approaching the house, and as it drew near she observed the coachman, though not in livery, was neatly dressed in black. He returned her smiling greeting with the usual dignified salutation denoting the respect of the old slave type.

“Young Mistis, Uncle Abram at yo’ sarvice—de Willesly keelage driver fur mos’ two ginérations. If yo’ is ready to start, young Mistis, we’ll be rackin’ along. De cart ain’t fur behind what’ll fetch yo’ trunks.”

The girl returned Uncle Abram’s elaborate introduction of himself with a bright bend of her head and a flashing little smile, proceeding at once to place herself and effects upon the back seat of the carriage. And presently finding the low-roofed hotel shut out from view by intervening hills, she felt no regret in her heart,

though she dreaded the long drive of thirty miles Uncle Abram had assured her was the extent of their day's journey. It being a soft, glowing day, the breeze played continually through the carriage windows, bringing in with it the scent of the wild hedge-rose, now a profusion of flowers sparkling with raindrops from the night shower, so delighting her that she immediately grew wonderfully interested in the country through which she was passing, and could not resist leaning her head far out of the window in the abandonment of enjoyment, breathing with rapture the newness of it all. She soon made the glad discovery, as she noted an added richness in the foliage of the trees, that they were surely nearing the densely wooded lands bordering the river.

The sun was hanging low in the horizon when the carriage paused at last at the top of a long hill. Bending forward and pointing with his whip to the right, Uncle Abram called,

"Young Mistis, dere is de house. Will you git out an' go froo de little i'on gate, or shall I drive roun' by de big gate?"

"Take the route through the *big* gate, by all means, Uncle Abram," the girl smilingly called out from the carriage window. Then turning her eyes upon the commodious residence, which crowned a rolling elevation, with its wide verandas, a lovely lawn carpeted with

velvety green grass, sloping gradually on all sides, evidencing the best care of well-trained servants, she fell to speculating on the coming meeting with Mrs. Willesly. But there was no want of welcome in her reception by her hostess, who met her with much cordiality. As she was conducted by Mrs. Willesly herself up the broad staircase, on into a richly furnished bed-room, with books, flowers, and pictures scattered round, indeed everything to make a young girl happy, she had not failed to note the refinement and elegance that characterized on all sides this lovely home.

"I am sure, Adrienne," Mrs. Willesly continued, as she assisted the girl to remove her hat and gloves, "that however slow the beginning may seem to you, the country having so few social advantages, and we do not see life from a city standpoint, we nevertheless can be happy in our own way, and you may grow into a home feeling sooner than you imagine. You are goodness itself, my child, in coming to me so promptly to cheer my lonely hours. However, perhaps I have done wrong to insist, under the circumstances, upon having you. Poor mother, when I think of her sufferings, I am induced to believe this war could have been avoided had Jeff Davis been disposed to regard the matter from a reasonable point of view."

"That, I am sure, is very doubtful," Adrienne answered, with a subtle note of protest in her voice. "Let us suppose Mr. Davis is sincere at least in the part he has taken in the movement."

"Very well, my dear," she laughed, "at any rate, in so early a stage of our acquaintance, be it far from me to wish to draw you into a discussion on the subject. I do not know your father, Adrienne, but I take a very tender interest in *you*, and intend keeping you with me until he shall come in person to spirit you away to his distant home. But forgive me, child, for I know you *must* be suffering from pangs of hunger after your long and tiresome drive. So I am now going, intent upon household duties. Hurry down, a warm supper will set you up."

"I must insist, Mrs. Willesly, that you treat me precisely as one of the family, and then I shall certainly feel at home." And closing the door upon Mrs. Willesly's retreating figure, the girl turned to her own melancholy, homesick thoughts. But after a plunge into a cool bath she felt deliciously refreshed, and was not long making herself ready for the evening repast that was to complete the day's unusual experience.

Glad of a distraction from worries endangering her peace of mind, Mrs. Willesly rattled on, at the supper table, in a lively strain, hoping to draw the girl's thoughts away from herself,

who, in the mean time, had been taking an inventory of the good points of her charming hostess, the entire impression proving most pleasing and satisfactory.

Mrs. Willesly's two children, Annie and Charles, met her with quiet refinement in their manner, addressing her as "Cousin Adrienne." She discovered at once they were cultured and interesting beyond their years. As the days passed by, and the acquaintance progressed, Adrienne often found herself invited to a stroll in the woods in search of ferns and wild flowers, varying the hour by a discussion of their botanical relations. Thus, by close association, a warm attachment ripened between the children and the lovely young guest.

Mrs. Willesly, declaring she could not think of jeopardizing her tender feet by the undertaking of such long jaunts, said to Adrienne one morning,

"I should like to have you drive with me, Adrienne, taking advantage of the fine weather. You must not let your self-imposed duties interfere with other pleasures. It was kind of you to undertake the children, which is a mere pastime for you; but there is no need of making a governess of yourself."

"Oh," laughed Adrienne, "I enjoy being with the children as friend and companion."

"Well," was the laughing reply, "they must have a holiday every day, while I hope you will not consider it an irksome task to give *me* some of your time."

"You know I shall be only too delighted to go with you whenever you like to have me," was the candid answer.

So, in the beauty of that very afternoon, as they were bowling over lovely country roads, beneath the shade of magnificent trees, Mrs. Willesly, as she looked down into the girl's face and caught the sparkle of delighted enjoyment in the dark eyes, naturally concluded she was growing content and happy. But could she have known the inner workings of Adrienne's thoughts, her contemplations perhaps would not have been so tranquil. For, alas, though rarely alluding to her father, the indefinite separation from him had begun to color her life with a cloud of unutterable despondency.

In consequence of the rigorous winter that now broke over them, shutting them out from the world, naturally this little family grew dependent upon one another for society, and accordingly their relations became very pleasant and sympathetic. Nevertheless, Adrienne, from the dismalness of the long winter evenings, often felt driven to the friendly comfort of the library, where, invariably greeted by a

cheerful fire, the cosy surroundings contrasting with the icy appearance of things outside, she was soothed into delightful repose as she sought companionship in the pages of an interesting story, perfectly congenial with the hour and her own inclinations.

At this juncture only occasional mutterings of war were heard, so they were lulled to quiet and rest. The days now flitted by, broken in upon alone by the negro plantation song in all its quaintness and peculiar cadence, as it came from the fields from early morn to the going down of the sun. To Adrienne one of the most attractive features of country life was sitting at the twilight hour and meditating as she looked into the darkening shadows and listened to the many insects peopling the night. Even when alone in her own room, during the stillness of the midnight hour, she would listen to the breeze sighing through the leaves of the trees close by, and through a window beside her bed would gaze out into the far-off starry heavens, her whole being vibrating in unison with the expansiveness and grandeur of the universe; but she felt how impenetrable to finite minds was the mystery that lay beyond its limitations.

In the natural order of things the narrow routine of this well-regulated family must soon give way to the troubles and perils lying in wait

in their pathway; for suddenly there was a startling report that the city of New Orleans was not sufficiently guarded against attack. The increasing alarm and cry for reinforcements, though promptly scouted by the officer in command, alas proved not an idle sensation, and was subsequently confirmed by General Butler's famous entrance into the city, thus capturing the stronghold of the Mississippi River.

The news of the capitulation of New Orleans reached Mrs. Willesly simultaneously with that of the death of her mother and Charles, Mrs. Somers's death having been caused by the sudden tidings that Charles had fallen in battle.

Mrs. Willesly was overwhelmed. Throwing up her hands she cried out, "Adrienne, I am indeed bereft!"

The girl was profoundly shocked, but could not find words to express the tender sympathy she felt in her heart for her sorrow-stricken friend. Knowing that time alone would serve to soften the keen edge of her crushing grief and bring back an interest in life, she was impressed with the thought that no consolation she could offer would soothe or heal the smitten heart.

Adrienne, left much of the time to herself, began to dwell upon the enigma of life, wonder-

ing why it should be so that her heart must be filled with a hungry ache, ever baffling a reaching out after a happiness that seemed fated to elude her grasp.

CHAPTER XI

The period of mourning passed during uneventful days. Winter again had been removed for the advance of the beauty and freshness of spring, and the air was sweet with the fragrance of flowers.

All at once the neighborhood was shaken out of its semi-lethargy by the report that a certain army division was on its way to the river, and would be encamped three miles below Mrs. Willesly's residence. The old fort was to be put in shape for battle, and as a matter of fact, all things being made ready, were taking on quite a serious outlook, while the very air was permeated with ominous warnings.

Delighted at the prospect of a relief from the uninterrupted solitude of her every-day life, in which for so long past there had been no room for any emotion in her heart save sorrow—noiseless footsteps, muffled voices, as it were, having been the order of the house—Mrs. Willesly entered into a pleasurable expectation. Adrienne cheerfully welcomed the change, the quiet of the house having become so exceedingly distasteful to her, she had begun to find the

burden of time quite too depressing to her youthful spirits.

Shortly after, Mrs. Willesly and Adrienne were sitting talking over a late breakfast, when Ferriby, the little black house-maid, suddenly appeared before them, grinning from ear to ear.

"Miss Helen," she said, much excited, "a sojer stopped me in de hall jes' now, an' say he would like to see you one minit."

At once rising from her chair, with the light of interest and curiosity in her face, Mrs. Willesly quitted the room. Being left alone, Adrienne rose also, but passed out on the veranda, and stood looking straight before her over level spreading fields to the luxuriant woodland beyond now all bathed in the sparkling morning sunshine, reflecting sadly over the fact that soon all this beauty and harmony in nature must feel the presence of an invading foe. "Oh, why," she thought, "since we are contented with our ploughing, sowing, and reaping, must our quiet fields be troubled by the rumble and devastation of war?" A sigh passed her lips as she bent forward, held by the charm of everything so near. But this moment Mrs. Willesly reappeared. Her eyes were lighted up with a look of eager pleasure as she said with a laugh, and a playful flutter in her manner,

"Well, Adrienne, I have come to report that the 'sojer' waiting to see me was no other than

the general in command of this division, a few hours in advance of his army, to make business arrangements. And do you know he asked of me the privilege of making my residence his headquarters. Besides he is anxious to board with me. He has a wife, one small child, and there is a maid to accommodate. Of course I deliberated on the matter, but finally agreed, knowing this addition to our family circle would greatly enliven the times and be an agreeable change from our usual humdrum existence. He can have the use of the suite of rooms adjoining the parlors. For, Adrienne, though you have been as sweet as can be about it, I know your life all these months has been as suppressed as possible."

"But, Mrs. Willesly, I would not have your decision influenced by a thought of *me*," pleaded Adrienne. "You must remember, to entertain an officer of this rank will mean an entire revolution in your usual domestic routine."

"Oh, well," she answered, a little impatiently, "the die is cast, and I am willing to abide by it." Adrienne turned slowly away, regretting her protest.

Late in the afternoon a large army ambulance rolled in upon Mrs. Willesly's smooth lawn. General Borden's family and effects promptly disgorged, were soon comfortably

lodged in their spacious, elegant apartments. But ere the bustle of the arrival had subsided, Adrienne had slipped away to her room, content to throw herself into the arms of a capacious chair and give herself up to a line of thought—dwelling upon the past, upon Mr. Strafford, who stood out clearly upon her mental canvas ploughing the Atlantic with his yacht at some distant point. Her brief acquaintance with him, his many kind courtesies, even the music of the waltz she had danced with him, came drifting over her. But all at once she paled suddenly as the same unreasoning thought of his attachment for Miss Conrad caused a darting pain through her heart. Distress and pride strove in her mind, and courageously rising from her chair, as it were, she put it at arm's length, and set to work preparing to meet more cheerful company than her own somber reflections.

An hour later, General Borden and his wife were presented to Miss de Courcelles at the supper table, and were so extraordinarily impressed by the ideal beauty of her face, and indefinable grace of manner, for an instant seemed scarcely able to take their eyes away from her.

"I don't wish to be meddlesome, Adrienne," Mrs. Willesly laughingly accosted the girl as she was taking her seat at the table, "but I have wondered where you were keeping yourself all

the afternoon, and naturally concluded you were on one of your favored rambles with the children."

The girl glanced with a sunny flash in her eyes at Mrs. Willesly, but her reply came in demure tones.

"You force the reluctant confession from me that I have spent the entire afternoon in my own room absorbed in the pleasant occupation of reading and meditating."

"Then," laughed Mrs. Willesly, teasingly, "I grow suspicious, and more curious every moment as to what the end will be. For is it not so that you were so delighted with the 'blue stocking' we happened to hear air her sentiments the other evening on 'woman suffrage,' 'temperance,' and such like, that you are preparing an exegesis on the subject that will immortalize your name in the pages of some literary or scientific magazine?"

"Pardon me," said the General, looking across the table at Adrienne, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, "but I am sure Miss de Courcelles would never impress one as belonging to that particular class of individuals who travel and lecture, or even write, on woman's suffrage."

Adrienne opened her beautiful eyes brightly, as with a graceful bend of her figure toward the General she laughingly accepted the challenge.

"I have heard it said, General, there is philosophy in meditating, and if thereby one should discover accidentally that a certain talent lay dormant in one's brain, would it be right, because it should not be the usual occupation of woman, to condemn it to extinction? But," with a lovely smile and a little ripple of laughter, "as I do not feel disposed to trespass upon the limits of my proper sphere, there is no danger of my ever treading so mistaken a path."

"I am sure," said the General, "lectures from the stump only exhaust effort, without bringing about the desired result. No good, as a rule, is accomplished by dictating morals to those who have been hardened by the touch of time."

"Really," ventured Mrs. Willesly, repressing an arch smile, "I feel that it is too bad that we should intrude our wants upon so grave a discussion; but may I trouble you, General, to help me to a piece of the broiled chicken?"

The General laughed, and as Mrs. Borden had made inquiries in regard to the surrounding country and people the conversation turned upon another topic.

The dignity and sweetness of Mrs. Borden at once won Adrienne's admiration, readily recognizing the pleasure that would be hers during their close association in the same house perhaps for weeks to come.

But Rosine, drawing Ferriby aside, questioned her privately as to who the lovely Miss de Courcelles could be, and exclaimed volubly over her beauty. Whereupon the little darky, being over-fond of the marvelous, proceeded to exaggerate glibly.

"Miss Adr'en is from furrin parts. I heered Miss Helen say that Miss Adr'en wuz a princess 'mong dem folkes in Egypt where her father lives."

"A princess, did you say?" repeated Rosine. "Well, anyway, she don't look like an American, I am sure."

But suddenly Ferriby, with a comical grimace, shambled round the corner of the house, leaving Rosine to cogitate at her leisure over this piece of ready invention on her part.

The unconscious object of this little discussion was this moment seated between the two children in the pony cart, which was now seen from the house crawling up the broad white road flooded with the brilliant afternoon sunshine. But as it disappeared across the top of the hill, two staff officers, coming from the opposite direction, dashed up to the gate and dismounted. Crossing the lawn to the house they were met by Mrs. Borden at the front door, who cordially invited them to have seats. Lieut. Belden accepted, while Major Herndon, who had private business with the General, retired

to his rooms, leaving the Lieutenant to a cosy chat with his General's wife, whom he had known, being from the same city, from his boyhood.

Lieut. Belden had a refined and pleasing personality, and his thin, well-bred face lighted up with interest and curiosity as he turned to Mrs. Borden and remarked,

"You seem delightfully situated here, Mrs. Borden."

"Yes," with an affable smile, "I often contrast the present surroundings with the primitive accommodations I had prepared myself to see, and have lost no time in mentally apologizing for my presumption, while, I assure you, I am enjoying it all immensely, with the addition of an abundance of wholesome country air. And I must not forget to mention that the General, even, has fallen a victim to the very excellent country fare."

"Which confirms the truth of the old saying," laughed the Lieutenant, "that the surest road to a man's heart is through an elaborate, well-cooked dinner."

"Now I am sure you are distorting the old saying, as well as my meaning," she answered, with an indulgent smile. Whereupon the Lieutenant made a courteous gesture of apology, and laughingly said,

"I crave your pardon, and will change the subject by modestly inquiring whether or not any attractive young ladies are living in the neighborhood?"

"I have a pleasant surprise for you," promptly answered Mrs. Borden. "A young lady is stopping at *this* house at present, who, but for the impediment of the war, long since would have been spirited away to the land of the Caliphs. While, to add to the mystery and charm of things, Rosine, my maid, has been told some absurd story—originating with the servants of course—that this young lady is a princess in that country in which is her home."

The Lieutenant blew a long, low whistle, and exclaimed in dramatic tones,

"The plot thickens! A princess in *this* house? When is the royal personage visible?"

Mrs. Borden laughed as she answered,

"Not this afternoon, at any rate, as she is out driving. But, Lieutenant, I must explain that the young lady in question really is the daughter of a retired capitalist who is forced to live in the far East on account of broken health. Mrs. Willesly, our hostess, informs me she was the ward of her mother. The girl has been educated in the United States, and is now waiting a suitable opportunity to join her father at his distant home, which is his permanent residence."

“‘All that a man hath will he give for his life,’” quoted the Lieutenant, with a laugh. “But to me it seems the acme of selfishness that a father should consign his young daughter to a life of sacrifice among semi-barbarians in order that he may live out the residue of his allotted days.”

However, it must here be said that from this moment Lieutenant Belden began to show an increasing interest in life and things about him, and to rally from the effects of a prolonged attack of homesickness, under which distressing malady he had been laboring lately, with scarcely any hope of relief.

An hour later the two officers were riding leisurely along toward camp, when suddenly they were confronted in the road by a small vehicle, seemingly weighted down with its burden of wild dog-wood blossoms. In the midst of these floral decorations, crowded together on a single seat, were two children and a lovely young girl. They were laughing merrily, in the gayest holiday spirits, as they whirled by, bestowing upon the two officers, as they passed, an amused look of curiosity.

“By Jove!” exclaimed Lieutenant Belden, quickly wheeling his horse directly across the road, as, struck by a sudden revelation, he looked eagerly after the flower-bedecked vehicle. “The Eastern princess, and no mistake!” And

his eyes, now lighting up with a gleam of pleasure, he gave way to a low amused laugh. How it happened, he never knew, but something woke in his soul that suddenly banished all feeling of melancholy. The sun seemed to shine with more exhilarating brilliance, the fresh green of the trees under which he was riding seemed to emit a sweeter fragrance. The following morning, his duty leading him to headquarters, he considered himself fortunate indeed, as he came face to face with the object of his thoughts, in company with Mrs. Borden, who, taking advantage of the opportunity, at once introduced him with a gracious smile. As he bowed low before the beautiful girl, mingled emotions of admiration and adoration swelling in his heart, causing a rush of colors over his face, the thought was uppermost in his mind, "Herndon is right, she is indeed an exquisite oriental lily, as dainty and sweet as she is bewilderingly lovely."

But the girl, with a slight bend of the head and a glance from her lovely eyes, continued on her way down the hall, leaving Mrs. Borden engaged in conversation with the Lieutenant, whose desire for a social chat suddenly evaporated with Adrienne's disappearance through the end door, when immediately contriving some plausible excuse, he retired to the General's apartments, whom he found seated at a table

profoundly engaged in examining a roll of papers. But raising his head as the Lieutenant entered, and pointing to a chair, he smilingly asked,

“You desire to see me, Belden?”

“I do, but I will wait until you are at leisure.”

After a while the General began to fold the document upon which he had been so assiduously engaged, and throwing it upon the table, turned quite around, facing Lieutenant Belden, and said reflectively,

“There is no doubt, Belden, that our inertia of the past few weeks will be broken by the grave engagement now confronting us at a very early day. I am positive General Grant, to avoid the necessity of a siege, intends dropping down to this point, and by cooperating with the Union forces above, will endeavor to capture Vicksburg by assault. We must make our resistance effective from any point of attack by the enemy.”

But there being no ready response to this, the General, throwing a keen, penetrating glance upon the Lieutenant, to find that he had been listening but impassively, after a slight pause blurted out,

“It seems to me, Belden, you are showing a great degree of indifference toward a very vital question!”

"Pardon me, General," now straightening himself and suddenly alert, as he slowly passed his hand across his brow. "My apparent inattention is indeed reprehensible. But I believe I am not feeling well this morning, and have decided premonitions of an illness."

"An illness at this stage of affairs," said the General, suppressing his irate feelings, "would be unfortunate. I would advise you to promptly consult a doctor; and, as you are not feeling well, I will excuse you, hoping you may be able to bring a better report to-morrow."

The General walked deliberately back to the table and resumed his occupation, while the Lieutenant quietly rose, feeling dismissed, and retired from the room.

In the mean time, as the days passed rapidly over, it had occurred to Lieutenant Belden as something strange, that during his coming and going to and from headquarters he had not been fortunate enough to meet Miss de Courcelles, and thinking it was perhaps an intentional avoidance, he rode away from the house each day disappointed and chagrined, and by a swift, sweeping gallop the longest way round to camp, tried to exorcise the demon of unrest that persistently assailed his dissatisfied soul.

The state of his sentiments being transmitted in some marvelous way to Mrs. Borden, called forth all the womanly sympathy of which her

generous nature was capable. So it happened as they were returning one morning from a delightful drive and the carriage was passing over the crest of a hill overlooking the expansive Mississippi River, while Adrienne was leaning forward with inexpressible yearning on her features, reminded, by the familiar sight of the water sparkling through the branches of trees, of a brief, happy period in her young life, bringing with it tender memories she would fain forget, suddenly Mrs. Borden's gentle, refined voice called her back to her present self.

"It seems, Adrienne, that we have been drawn together by an affectionate bond of sympathy, notwithstanding our brief acquaintance, while so warm an attachment has sprung up in my heart for you, that I find myself even indulging the hope that one of *my* soldiers may fall into the good fortune of persuading you to remain with us, so that I may not have the fear of losing you entirely out of my life." But as she watched the effect of her words on the girl she saw no blush in her cheek, nor was there any emotion visible, nor the least tremor in the voice that answered promptly,

"I assure you, Mrs. Borden, so flattering an expression of regard from you is sufficiently gratifying, without any allusion to a happiness which, for me, is far in the future."

“Ah,” Mrs. Borden sighed inwardly, “what a mystery it seems that a young girl can resist a young man of Lieutenant Belden’s fascination and strong individuality.” But prudently deciding to let matters drop for the present, she persuaded herself that time yet would have its perfect work in the accomplishment of her desire.

CHAPTER XII

Congeniality, the ingredient promotive of pleasant relations, existed in the hearts of this little home circle, a chord of sympathy that secured, as it were, the charm of a family union in its domestic completeness.

The afternoon being too lovely to linger indoors, Adrienne, armed with the latest popular magazines, came downstairs with the intention of treating herself to an hour's undisturbed rest and enjoyment. Moving swiftly and lightly across the lawn, she bent her steps to a romantic-looking spot, where rustic seats were scattered round beneath the wide spreading shade of a magnificent water-oak. She seated herself and prepared to clip the pages, when the click of spurs coming near caught her ear. Rising to her feet, she turned and faced Lieutenant Belden, in company with another officer, whom he introduced as Colonel Waite, commander at the fort. Both officers bowed low before the girl, who received them with her usual ease and grace of manner, asking them to have seats, which they smilingly accepted, proceeding at once to make themselves agreeable. And truly, by the note of gladness trem-

bling in his voice, the Lieutenant had received an impetus to merriment, as he now chatted away, by no means limited in his powers to entertain. Colonel Waite, on the other hand, who was reserved by nature, sat observing at his leisure the charming picture Adrienne made as she talked freely with the Lieutenant, making little animated gestures, and thought how dainty she looked. But this moment Mrs. Borden and Mrs. Willesly appeared, coming up and joining them, and after formal introductions they were soon seated in a circle, laughing and chatting in lively argument. Colonel Waite sat watching the sunlight and listened to the breeze making a gentle ripple among the leaves, and presently turning to Adrienne, near whom he sat, he said, with marked deference in his manner,

“I find it charming here, Miss de Courcelles, as I look upon this, one of the old-fashioned Southern homes of which one hears so much, and that so singularly represents the tastes of the people. Though I am enrolled in the Southern army, I live rather North than South. But since war has become the pursuit of my life, being a devout worshiper of nature, I have at least enjoyed the grand, picturesque scenery through which it has been my pleasure to pass on our extended marches. I have been impressed with the thought that a home some-

where in the midst of these limitless Southern forests would become the 'garden spot of the world' to me."

"You would risk a great deal to find yourself mistaken, perhaps," was the smiling reply. "I am sure the exchange of gaslit streets and the clatter and rush of the city for an isolated life on a dreary waste, would inevitably result in a deplorable state of melancholy and disappointment. Though it is true, and the fact has been demonstrated, that it is possible to become accustomed to any state in life."

"If the question is not too personal, Miss de Courcelles, may I ask if you are speaking from personal experience?"

She laughed, but answered promptly,

"I must acknowledge, Colonel Waite, that at first, when I came here, I was at a loss to know what to do with my time, but gradually falling into the silent paths of beautiful nature, I no longer crave the rush, tinsel, and parade of society. In fact," now smiling upon him beamingly, "I am wholly in sympathy with your partiality for the country, and feel that here in this quiet spot I have well renounced the world and its vanities."

As Adrienne looked into Colonel Waite's dark, intellectual eyes, and observed the dignity and gravity of his face, she was impressed with the certainty that he was a true gentle-

man, a brave soldier—one who would repudiate in letter or spirit the word “failure.”

The lull in the conversation of those around them called their attention, and turning at once, they discovered all eyes were bent upon a tall, distinguished-looking man in uniform now passing through the gate, who looked about him, and seeing the group under the trees, came forward, lifting his hat as he addressed them.

“Pardon me, but may I ask if these are General Borden’s headquarters?”

Doubting the evidence of her own senses, Adrienne had struggled to her feet, her brain in a whirl, a deadly white spreading over her face. But as the stranger’s eyes, in passing over the group, fastened upon her with visible astonishment, she now stood before him, flushed and lovely, while he quickly crossed over to her side, taking her hand in his as he said, in the high-bred tones she remembered so well,

“It is true the unexpected is sure to happen. I cannot recover from my surprise, Miss de Courcelles, at seeing you so far from home.”

She looked up with a sudden flash in her eyes. “My surprise at seeing *you*, Mr. Strafford, when I had imagined you far away pursuing the even tenor of your travels on the other side of the Atlantic, is altogether equal to your own.”

“While I trust, seeing me in the Confederate uniform will not expose me to your ridicule,

that I have dared enlist where my duty is not comprised, thus perhaps lowering my standard of courage in your eyes. But, as my time is limited, may I ask the pleasure of seeing you before I leave this evening?"

Adrienne gave a ready, smiling assent, the contact of his glance and subtle fascination of his presence filling her soul with an inexpressible, tumultuous joy, though she managed to answer with composure,

"I shall be delighted, Mr. Strafford. But now allow me to introduce you to my friends."

In the mean time, the two officers had discovered Mr. Strafford ranked as colonel. Mrs. Borden, immediately after the introduction, addressed him.

"I believe, Colonel Strafford, you asked to see General Borden? I will take you to his rooms with pleasure." He bowed, then lifting his hat to the remaining company, turned at once and followed his gracious, smiling guide into the house.

The unexpected appearance of this officer upon the scene, on a private mission to their General, caused frequent passages of significant glances between the Colonel and Lieutenant. Unable to resist the promptings of curiosity they even ventured cautious inquiry of Adrienne as to how and when she had made Colonel Strafford's acquaintance.

"For," said Colonel Waite, "I am sure he is an Englishman, who has not long been away from his native soil."

"Yes," she answered briefly, "he is English. I was under the impression that he had returned to England. When I first met him in New Orleans he was in the midst of a pleasure cruise. His yacht was anchored in port quite awhile."

"To get all the pleasure one can out of living seems to be the standard of life of the English," said Colonel Waite, laconically.

"Is the American standard any more praiseworthy, Colonel?" laughed the Lieutenant. "Leaving pleasure altogether out of the question, I am sure that *we* are striving only to get all the *money* we can out of living, thus squandering our God-given talents in the indulgence of so gross a mercenary spirit that nothing short of another deluge can purify us."

"Yes," said Colonel Waite, carefully, "we on this side of the world are in much too great a hurry, getting beyond the idea of making things better by growing out of the sordid, up to a higher plane of existence."

Unconscious of the close scrutiny he had given the meeting between Colonel Strafford and Miss de Courcelles, Lieutenant Belden was satisfied that no *affair-de-coeur* existed between them, consequently his normal spirits were soon

in full play. But presently, compelled to obey the behest of duty, he turned a reluctant face toward camp. As they walked side by side across the smooth grassy lawn to where their horses were standing, Colonel Waite remarked, with a preoccupied air,

"I suppose the advent of this officer, perhaps on a secret mission to the Trans-Mississippi Department, portends an early rain of shot and shell. Though it is merely surmise on my part."

"All right, Colonel, let them come. We will meet them at Philippi," the Lieutenant sang out as they rode away.

The measure of curiosity and interest manifested by Mrs. Willesly toward Col. Strafford was a sure proof of the marked impression he had made upon her.

"Rest assured, Adrienne, there is mystery in this procedure, that a foreigner of *his* caste should generously offer to spill his blood for an alien country bears absurdity on the face of it." But suddenly she perceived her remarks had been addressed to empty space; for the girl had flown like the wind up the stairway, where she entered the privacy of her own room, throwing herself into a chair, as she clasped her hands before her eyes and exclaimed aloud,

"Surely this is not the vagary of an unsound mind, or something great has happened to me this day, the most eventful of my life! But, oh!

I hope indeed that I did not betray the joy I felt in my heart at seeing him so unexpectedly." She stopped short, her cheeks glowing, her voice tremulous and broken, when, like an electric shock, the thought of Miss Conrad being the cause of Colonel Strafford remaining in the South flashed through her brain, causing her to draw her mantle of pride closely round her. Thus shrouding her heart in a cloud of impenetrable reserve, with sublime self-control she managed to compose her thoughts into some degree of calmness. However, at this moment a stir at the door drew her facing the grinning Ferriby.

"Miss Adr'en," she giggled, "a splendiferous lookin' ossifer down-stairs say he'd like to see you 'fo' he goes."

"What a little idiot you are, Ferriby. I am sure your weakness for using big words is as absurd as your worship of gold lace and cavalry spurs is sublime."

"Yes'm," she answered in good faith, with suppressed giggles.

But a conflict of emotion was stirring in the girl's heart as she descended the dimly lighted staircase to find Colonel Strafford waiting at the foot. He took her hand, at the same time glancing over her face and figure with a thrill of delight as he led her to a seat close by. Though, instead of the happy light he had ex-

pected to see in her eyes, he was conscious of the look of pain and touch of cold that flitted over her face (for she had struggled to meet him as circumstances demanded), and as he looked down upon her lovely features, puzzled to account for the subtle change in her manner, he refrained from telling her of his love, thinking at another time perhaps fate would smile more benignly upon his efforts. So, with an air of firmness, his usual high-bred tones in no way betraying the actual disquiet of his mind, he said,

"I have been finding it difficult indeed, Miss de Courcelles, to realize that we have met again, which has brought so vividly before me my delightful sojourn in the fascinating Crescent City."

"Ah, I remember it all so well," she answered dreamily. "But that I should see you now wearing the Confederate uniform is infinitely surprising to me."

"Your surprise is not by any means equal to my own, Miss de Courcelles. I suppose my attachment for the Southerners, knowing I could lend my feeble aid in no other way save by joining the ranks in their defense, must have largely influenced me to drift, so to speak, into the army. Besides, I will confess that I was reluctant to return to England and face the same monotonous routine."

"But, Colonel Strafford," she replied, with a faintly ironical smile in her eyes, "are not you running counter to your national convictions by indulging so democratic a spirit? It doubtless will unfit you thoroughly for living again under the unchangeable methods of Great Britain."

He laughed a low, musical laugh, but as there was no immediate response, looking up, Adrienne observed that his eyes were bent upon her mourning garb with a deep look of concern.

"Pardon me, but may I ask if you have met with the loss of a dear relative or friend?"

"Then you had not heard of Mrs. Somers's death, nor that Charles had fallen in battle?"

"I regret most sincerely to hear of it," was the answer, in grave tones. "This accounts for your being here, Miss de Courcelles."

"Yes," she said briefly, "Mrs. Willesly is the daughter of my guardian."

"As I have only a moment at my disposal, having already drawn on my limited time, I wish to suggest, Miss de Courcelles, that in view of an engagement, which is now hourly expected, it being reasonable to suppose the conflict will fall on *this* ground, that it is expedient you should withdraw from certain danger. Have you not acquaintances remote from this, with whom you can take refuge until it shall be safe for you to return?"

The girl was infinitely touched by the anxiety in his voice, nevertheless, with an instinct at self-preservation,—she raised her eyes to his as she hardened her heart to answer only in ordinary tones—

“Really, Colonel Strafford, I don’t wish to be ungracious, and will assure you of my appreciation of your timely warning, but I am under Mrs. Willesly’s protection, therefore do not feel at liberty to declare my independence by deserting her in so critical an hour.”

“My anxiety for your safety must plead my excuse for having urged any advice in the matter. But, as I must not delay a second longer,” rising and taking her hand in his, with that grave, subtle earnestness peculiar to him, “I must say good-by, with the hope that these evil times may soon pass, and that one may think of being happy again.”

He took his hat, and bowed profoundly, then strode out into the night, leaving the girl motionless, and pale as death, when, suddenly breaking into a passion of tears, she cried as one only grieves over the body of their cherished dead. But presently turning slowly away she went up to her room and bathed her face to remove the traces of tears. She began to pace the room in anxiety, and struggle as she would to hide it, the pallor on her face was evident even by the dim light on the staircase as she

presently wended her way to the parlor. For the first time in weeks she now raised the piano, thinking to quiet her sad, trembling heart by singing a favorite German air; and the next moment the exquisite contralto voice, rolling out into the room, filled it with thrilling melody as it swelled pure and high, and at last triumphant, so startling General and Mrs. Borden that, as the last notes were dying away, the singer's ears were astonished by a burst of enthusiasm at her elbow.

"Why, child," exclaimed Mrs. Borden, "you are a perpetual surprise. I shall take it a serious affront that you have kept us in ignorance of your delicious voice."

"I appreciate the compliment, coming from you, Mrs. Borden," the girl answered brightly, though there was sadness in her eyes.

"But there is a quality in your voice, Miss Adrienne, one seldom has the good fortune to hear," said the General, earnestly. "The ingredient of which I speak is *feeling*. You sing as though you are under the influence of an inspiration."

Turning her head so that he might not detect the color coming and going in her cheeks, Adrienne struggled to reply with outward composure,

"I feel infinitely flattered, General, at your opinion, but will frankly say that I am sure my

voice would be regarded with derision by highly critical teachers. Nevertheless, I agree with you that the most impressive music is that which is rendered by inspiration."

But that night Adrienne crept softly to bed and wept her sad tears in solitude, for the episode of the afternoon had returned in full force. She thought long over Colonel Strafford's extraordinary appearance in their midst. She felt, knowing he was a man of intrepid will and purpose, that he would undoubtedly accomplish his undertaking. Sleep, the sweet restorer, utterly forsook her tired eyes, and accordingly, with the dawn of a new day, she felt so listless, such a want of interest in her surroundings, she was not in the humor for the company of others. But by drawing heavily upon her dowry of patience and self-control she managed to overcome in a measure her seriously depressed condition. It being Sunday, she found many passages in her Bible singularly comforting to her in her present state of mind.

Lieutenant Belden, appearing at headquarters as usual in the morning, was taken by surprise at seeing Adrienne sitting in the hall quietly reading. She looked smilingly up into his face with the dark magnetic eyes he had found so difficult to resist, as she said brightly,

"So, Lieutenant, this lovely sunshiny day has lured you away from the fascinations of camp

life. I have just been thinking that, notwithstanding my fondness and admiration of the country, I should object seriously to living permanently upon a remote river plantation, where one's movements are so restricted, so entirely dependent upon, so to speak, 'time and tide.' "

"It is but natural to sigh for a change," said Lieutenant Belden. "Our poor human nature continually reaches out after something beyond the treadmill of dull routine."

"While," she added, laughing, "that one must live eight miles from church privileges would necessarily cause one to grow akin to heathens."

"It is a deplorable fact that even in this Christian enlightenment there is a tendency to retrograde, held in check alone by keeping in touch with the ways of Truth. I too was thinking, on my way to headquarters this morning, this serene and lovely day, with an atmosphere of peace and restfulness enveloping the world, is portentous in its silence along our lines, which doubtless is but the 'calm before the storm.' There is no use in crossing the bridge, however, until we get to it." Now taking up the Bible she had placed face downward beside her, and turning to the front leaf upon which her name was beautifully inscribed in gilt letters, he said, "your name is French, of course."

"Oh, yes, I am both Spanish and French, on my father's side."

"Then, are you a Catholic?"

But before she could answer he proceeded to read one of the Psalms, his voice, vibrating under the sentiment of the verses, so charming her, that chancing this moment to look into her face flushed a rosy red, his heart beat quickly to the eager hope that a great happiness was in store for him in the near future.

At this point the sound of wheels drew both their eyes in the direction of the drive. Adrienne rose at once, and looked out in time to see a young lady enter the walk, coming briskly toward the house.

"A visitor," she cried, "and *surely* it is Kittie!"

"Oh, Adrienne," Kittie exclaimed, her face beaming with delighted smiles as she threw her arms round her dear friend in the old affectionate way, "can it be I have found you at last? And just to think, it was by the merest chance I heard you were so near me."

"I had not even dreamed of such a thing, Kittie."

"I am sure of it, as nothing could have kept us apart so long. But you cannot imagine the task I have had persuading father to consent to my hunting you up. Those raids, you know, that are now becoming so frequent and disas-

trous, are his terror by day and by night. And it does seem sad indeed, that our soldiers, so brave, so true, and determined to fight to the bitter end, will be utterly unable to shield our country from the final blow. It stands to reason our pitiful odds cannot hold out forever against the whole world."

"Ah, Kittie, our generals are of undaunted courage, whose perseverance and strategy will yet accomplish a grand victory, weak though in numbers we may be. But, tell me how far you live from this."

"Eighteen long miles. And when I confess to you that I have been traveling since early dawn over the smoothest of roads, you can imagine what a jaunt it is. While I am under a solemn promise to father not to prolong my visit over *two* hours, which will barely give me time to reach home before total darkness shall overtake me."

Meantime, Kittie had acknowledged the introduction to Lieutenant Belden, by a bright, careless nod, when, the next moment, turning to Adrienne, she asked,

"But how came you *here*, Adrienne?"

"Surely, you know Mrs. Willesly is the daughter of my guardian?"

"Surely, I did not. But I have not forgotten how cruelly your guardian tore you from

us at school, not so much as consulting your *wish* in the matter, which I resent to this day."

"Are you allowing your prejudice to follow its object into the grave, Kittie?" said Adrienne in mild rebuke.

"Since we have been brought together again, I am all right now—disposed to be at peace with the world, living or dead."

Kittie's downright sayings secretly amused Lieutenant Belden, who sat near, with his eyes bent upon the pages of a newspaper.

"But, Kittie," was Adrienne's next question, by way of changing the subject, "tell me what you have done with your brave resolutions to serve your country? Your avowed intention in that direction on one occasion at school now looms up before me from the dim shadows of the past."

Kittie laughed serenely. "I am sure you would not have been disappointed if I could have made up my mind to defy custom. The fact is," the sense of the ridiculous now springing into life in her eyes, "after grave consideration, my dear, I decided we were too many centuries removed from Joan of Arc, who 'buckled on her armor, mounted her charger, and made the world ring with her deeds of prowess,' to attempt to imitate a career so brilliant."

"Which means, Kittie?"

"That I have exercised a woman's privilege to change my mind. My ambition for notoriety in that direction has been gradually oozing through the sieve of intervening days, while, of late, I have been entertained watching the maneuvers of our famous 'parlor' scouts, who, instead of accomplishing brave exploits on behalf of their country, employ their idle moments 'storming the maiden's castle,' and amusing themselves as devotees to their enticing charms, unable to tear themselves away, even at the behest of duty. I am positive such knight-errantry has had no parallel since the middle ages."

"I see, Kittie," laughed Adrienne, "you are as incorrigible as ever. Time, the dreaded conqueror of all, will have no effect in sobering you, I am afraid."

But Kittie undutifully remained *three* hours, and was so continually bubbling over with fun that the music of her merry laugh touched the heart of every member of the household, all of whom had duly presented themselves to make her acquaintance.

Finally, though, as the time was up, Kittie exacted a solemn promise from Adrienne that she would visit her without fail during the following week, then unwillingly turned her face toward home, carrying with her the remembrance of a short, bright, happy visit.

"I like your friend, Adrienne. She is so full of life and animation," said Mrs. Borden as they lingered on the veranda watching the carriage as it slowly wound its way over the brow of the hill.

"Yes," answered Adrienne, now returning Kittie's last wave of her handkerchief from the carriage window, "hers is a merry spirit, and though often ridiculous, she is the same delightful Kittie. She has a sweet, genuine nature, but is frequently flippant, even given to nonsense."

"Pardon me, Miss de Courcelles," said Lieutenant Belden, who had this moment joined them, "Miss McVea is original, out of the usual, and very charming. She is quite a character study."

CHAPTER XIII

The morning was deliciously cool, and brilliant with sunlight, which, with a glow on her beautiful face, Adrienne seemed to enjoy as she lingered beside the little front gate, carelessly leaning against the post. As the fresh morning breeze gently ruffled the soft fluffy locks of her dusky hair, and fanned into ripples the folds of her thin summer dress, she unconsciously indulged a reverie. But the next moment she was roused by the sudden crack of a whip. Raising her head, she saw Uncle Abram, seated high in a wagon, coming forward. He pulled up opposite her, calling out in a cheerful morning salutation,

"Glad to see you lookin' so peart-like, dis fine mornin', young Mistis."

"Thanks, Uncle Abram, I am always well, and it is so lovely this morning. But where are you off to even before the breakfast hour?"

"Goin' arter rashuns, young Mistis. 'Ka'se dere is no tellin', dese onsartin times, what *mout* happen 'fo' de day closes; an' I like to prepare again' onexpected trouble."

Replacing his hat upon his white wooly head, with a flourish of his whip, Uncle Abram con-

tinued on his way, shouting in resonant voice the old camp meeting chorus, "I am bound for the promised land," the girl standing and listening until the last reverberating note had died away in the distance.

It was the evening of the same day. Adrienne was alone on the veranda, pacing to and fro in the stillness of the night. The moon had risen clear and silvery, reflecting the branches of the trees across the white columns of the house. Suddenly she paused as the murmur of voices caught her ear (for in consequence of Uncle Abram's failure to reach home at the usual time, Adrienne was aware that Aunt Polly, his wife, taking several women from the quarters with her, had gone forward to meet him), and gazing out on the broad white road, now gleaming in the moonlight bright as day, she descried a wagon creeping along, followed by the women, whose mournful cries and lamentations brought every member of the household to the veranda, in terror and dismay. Suddenly Ferriby popped up, with eyes stretched big and wide, as she jerked out, spasmodically,

"Miss Helen, po' Uncle Abram is shot daid! Dey say de Yankees kill him."

"Hold your tongue, Ferriby," Mrs. Willesly spoke sharply. "I am sure that is not so. The General here would be the first to know of their

presence in the country. I am going myself and find out the cause of the trouble." Suiting the action to her words, Mrs. Willesly left the house in the wake of the wagon and procession on their way to the quarters.

Meanwhile, Adrienne had been trying to realize that the old man, whom she had seen in the early morning so full of life and preparations for the future, was now lying cold and rigid in death. What a strange fatality, she thought, that the evening had fulfilled the prophetic chorus of his song, sung in the beauty and gladness of the morning as he rolled on but too surely to the "promised land." An hour had passed, when Mrs. Willesly returned to the house with a condensed but graphic account of Uncle Abram's untimely death, given by the man who had accompanied the body home.

"Poor old Abram's death was purely accidental," said she. "It seems two men, under the influence of drink, were having a free fight in the street, when a stray pistol ball entered the store in which Abram was standing beside the counter, that moment in the act of taking a chew of tobacco, which is still clinched between his teeth. The ball passed through his temples, causing instant death. The plug is still clutched in his hand in the death grip. Poor Abram, so kind, so faithful, so true. How strange it is he should have met such a fate!"

And she was not ashamed of the tears that were now coursing down her cheeks, but sat pondering over the many kind, unselfish acts she had received at the hands of this devoted old family servant.

Adrienne turned away and quietly sought Aunt Polly's cabin, in the silence of the night, whom she found remarkably composed under the circumstances, answering the girl's low spoken words of sympathy with wonderful self-control.

"You see, young Mistis," she said, "it's jes' *dis* way. My ole man ain't cheated out'n many days nohow, an' he wuz a Christian. No, honey, I ain't 'stressed, 'ka'se I know he's at rest."

Such an exhibition of courage, from so crude a source, told upon the girl. She returned to the house with her hopes strengthened and a more firmly rooted faith.

CHAPTER XIV

Events had so shaped themselves that on the following morning the entire staff, wearing on their faces a serious look of gravity that bespoke weighty matters under discussion, appeared at headquarters, at once seeking private audience with their chief.

Impressed with a vague feeling that something of moment was on hand, though not in the least apprehensive of the real nature of the situation, Adrienne went away to her room, not a little disturbed and anxious, and was standing beside the window watching the departing officers riding away from the house in correct order, when suddenly she was aware the room was flooded with the fragrance of flowers, and turning round her eyes fell on Rosine now coming toward her with a lovely bouquet in her hand which she presented the girl, "With Lieutenant Belden's compliments."

"How perfectly exquisite," cried Adrienne, a delighted rosy flush spreading over her cheeks as she gathered the flowers into her hands, and bent her head to breathe their sweetness. But her face sobered perceptibly as she cried out in her heart, "Oh, why is it so, that even my

enjoyment of this simple little tribute should be dampened by its measure of unpleasantness?" And she mentally hated herself that she should feel so wholly unable to reciprocate the interest with which the giver seemed to regard her.

In accordance with the promise she had given Aunt Polly that she would sing her "ole man's" favorite hymn at his burial, at ten o'clock Adrienne appeared in the lower hall ready to start on her solemn mission, and was standing a moment with her face buried in the flowers, which she still held in her hand, when Lieutenant Belden unexpectedly entered. He paused, taking in at a glance the situation. A swift gleam of hope, almost satisfaction, flashed over his face; for this simple little act of the girl, though only a trifle, revived confidence in his heart.

"I am glad, Lieutenant," she said, looking up with smiling eyes, and for an instant a pink glow was in her cheeks, "of the opportunity of thanking you again for these lovely flowers—these beautiful reminders of heaven."

"I feel infinitely flattered, Miss de Courcelles, I assure you," he said, bowing low. "But may I ask whither you are tending this morning?"

"Uncle Abram's funeral is at this hour and I have given my promise to be there."

"Will you allow me the privilege of accompanying you?" he asked solicitously.

She hesitated a moment, then said,

"I am afraid, Lieutenant, the experience would prove anything but pleasant for you."

"Rest tranquil, Miss de Courcelles, I am sure I shall be able to acquit myself creditably, never fear."

After arranging the flowers in a handsome rose-bowl filled with fresh water and placing it on a stand in the hall, Adrienne and Lieutenant Belden started out, walking slowly down the broad street leading between the quarters, shaded on either side by magnificent oaks, interspersed with the old-fashioned locust now in full bloom, the fragrance of the flowers, as they took in the cleanliness and pleasing appearance of the low white-washed cabins bordering the long stretch of avenue, regaling delightfully their senses.

The funeral cortege, made up of the old man's many friends and boon companions, was just in the act of moving. The Lieutenant and Adrienne followed slowly. As they advanced deeper into the forest, soon Uncle Abram's freshly dug grave loomed up, a solemn and suggestive sight, while directly over the open grave, perched upon a branch of the tree, a sweet-singing bird was chanting in low notes a requiem for the departed soul. All at once, in the ecstasy of religious fervor, an old-fashioned hymn swelled out over valley and

hill-side, in melancholy echoes, from the large assemblage. After this came an agonizing, fervent, impressive prayer from the 'colored divine,' so loudly emphasized on all sides by groanings and intonings from the mourners that the scene partook of the weird and uncanny. The next moment, "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," sung to a simple, touching air by Adrienne's sweet contralto voice, of a peculiar charm and timbre, so startled the Lieutenant that he changed color. It was a revelation that sank deep into his soul, never to be eradicated. She sang it through to the end, the negroes bending and swaying their bodies to its cadence and rhythm, while the young officer's curious glance traveled over the crowd of black faces encircling the grave, thinking to himself that never before had he been placed in quite so novel a position. But as she ceased, his gaze wandered back to the dainty girl by his side, in time to see a tear fall upon her somber dress, and, stooping, he whispered a proposal to leave, as the thudding dirt had begun to fall on the coffin lid.

As they walked slowly away there was a shadow on the girl's sweet face that did not vanish, even when they had reached the open sunshine. Presently, looking up into Lieutenant Belden's face, she said,

"I want to thank you, Lieutenant, for your kindness. It was a relief not to have been alone

out there. Though I feel distressed indeed at Uncle Abram's untimely death, he is gone, never to come back; his place will never be filled in *this* family."

"If I have served you in any way, Miss de Courcelles, I am amply repaid, I assure you. You must allow me to say that I no longer wonder at your power to win all hearts," and now he looked intently down upon the drooping head. "For my part, I will freely confess that since I first met you I have thought of no one else—dreamed of no one else; and though I may have to give you up, you can never know how entirely I love you. Let me plead with you not to think lightly of what means life to me." He stopped abruptly, for his voice had grown husky with feeling. But as she slowly shook her head, glancing up into his sad, brooding face, there was no mistaking the gravity in her eyes and voice as she said, in low, sweet tones,

"Believe me, Lieutenant Belden, I cannot tell how grieved I am at this. I must not encourage your love, nor must you dwell upon the thought. Please forget it as soon as possible by putting it entirely out of your heart."

They had reached the veranda. The Lieutenant replied, with a little touch of sadness in his voice,

"Perhaps I have presumed too much on so recent an acquaintance. I thank you, Miss de Courcelles, for your ready and cool suggestions, and assure you it shall be as you wish." Bowing low, he left her standing with flushed cheeks, her heart beating violently at the thought of what had occurred. She felt there was no accounting for the vagaries of the human heart, as strive as she would, love refused to spring into life at her bidding.

An hour later, as Lieutenant Belden left the General's rooms, his eager glance round in search of Adrienne meeting with disappointment, he was conscious of an unspeakable, humiliated, and hurt feeling in his heart; while the girl herself, sitting in her room in moody silence, was running over in her mind the unpleasant ordeal—which she sincerely deplored—through which she had just passed.

Mrs. Borden, having observed the brooding melancholy on the Lieutenant's face, surmising the cause, exclaimed to herself,

"If that foolish girl has rejected him, I shall indeed be more disappointed than I care to acknowledge to myself. She is so lovely, and is charmingly suited to him."

CHAPTER XV

General Borden, his wife, and Adrienne formed a trio at the breakfast table the next morning. Mrs. Willesly, having spent a sleepless night with a pain in her face, was not present.

Adrienne, a little pale perhaps, but lovely in her pallor, presided at table with her usual ease of manner. But the General, heretofore so urbane and pleasant, was now abstracted and troubled, while to the eye of an outsider it would appear that any attempt at conversation was strained and irregular. All at once the click of horse-hoofs coming rapidly toward the house was heard on the smooth gravelled road, and immediately Major Herndon, with Lieutenant Belden, dashed up to the gate and dismounted, agitation and excitement showing in their faces. The next moment the General had received a message that caused his face to pale perceptibly, and rising from the table he abruptly quitted the room. But the next moment he was back again, holding a conference with his wife in rapid, low tones, then hurried out into the hall, leaving Mrs. Borden with con-

sternation on her features. She moved slowly toward Adrienne, and said in almost a whisper,

"Child, I have the greatest news to tell you. The Federal battleships are now standing opposite the fort. An engagement will ensue at once. General Borden has warned me to leave with as much despatch as possible. Surely, Mrs. Willesly will raise no objection to retiring with us under the protection of our soldiers as they fall back to prepare for an attack on land."

But when Mrs. Willesly promptly but kindly declined the offer of refuge under the Confederate wing, Mrs. Borden was indeed taken aback.

"In the event of battle, Mrs. Willesly," said she, "what protection can you render your family or property?"

"I am sure I cannot foresee what is about to happen, but I have determined to remain in my home, whatever may be the peril of so doing," was the decided answer.

"Certainly you have not thought it wise to keep Adrienne with you?"

"Really, Adrienne, now since I think of it, I cannot allow you to remain. You must go with Mrs. Borden. It is the only thing you can do."

The girl was standing with her back to them, looking from the window out on the sunlit lawn, but turned and crossed over to Mrs. Bor-

den, and taking her hand in her own with a warm friendly pressure, she said earnestly,

"Believe me, Mrs. Borden, I value your kindness more highly than I can say, but I cannot think of saving myself, thus leaving my friend alone, and suffering as she is at this moment. You must know such an act on my part is simply out of the question."

"Adrienne, I devoutly pray you may not have cause to repent of your decision. But I no longer have time to plead with you. I will say good-by, Mrs. Willesly, breathing a heartfelt prayer for the safety of your little family, and that your lovely home may not meet with any disaster."

Mrs. Borden hurried away, to find Rosine had not been idle in her absence, but had gathered together everything in readiness to start at quick notice.

Lieutenant Belden was infinitely shocked at Adrienne's resolution, and had started to seek her, with the intention of persuading her to change her mind, even at the eleventh hour, and join them, when a sudden summons from his General forestalled the movement. But as he hastened forward to obey the mandate of his superior officer, he found time as he passed through the hall, to say to Adrienne,

"It is not 'good-by,' Miss de Courcelles; I will not have it so, but will hurry back as soon

as the battle is over to assure myself of your safety."

He wrung her hand, and hurried on, just as Mrs. Borden came up, with solemn face and her eyes wet with tears. Drawing the girl affectionately into her arms and kissing her tenderly, she said,

"I cannot bear to leave you in this way, Adrienne, for I am afraid you have made an unwise decision."

At parting Adrienne's eyes expressed a boundless look of sadness as they smiled a melancholy farewell. And presently, as she heard the ambulance lumber out of the lawn, she knew they were now left to the mercy of circumstances, and felt all the more desolate after having had the protection of soldiers so gallant and chivalrous. But seeing the emergency, Mrs. Willesly and Adrienne set to work by a strong effort to fortify themselves in the determination to brave all before them unflinchingly.

CHAPTER XVI

At high noon on the same day, Mrs. Willesly and Adrienne, restless and at a loss to know what to do, had settled themselves in chairs on the veranda and were discussing their now serious situation, when Dr. Harding, the family physician, galloped up to the gate, calling out in tones of evident excitement and agitation,

"I do not wish to be an alarmist, Madam, but thought it my duty to let you know that the Federals are preparing to leave the boats. A battle will soon be in progress. But, should the action bear more in the direction of Champion Hill, you will escape the thickest of the engagement. However, stragglers from both armies are more to be dreaded than anything."

"I thank you, Doctor," Mrs. Willesly answered, "for your kindness and trouble. I am beginning to realize how foolish and reckless I have been in refusing Mrs. Borden's repeated offer of protection under the Confederate wing. But I could not decide to desert my home in cold blood."

"If you will pardon the expression of an old friend, Madam, I must say that you have been

exceedingly unwise in refusing so generous an invitation."

"I am satisfied of that fact, Doctor. But, oh!" and she now buried her face in her hands in excessive pain, the next moment lifting her head, showing features drawn and white, as she called out, "Doctor, will you kindly come and see what is the cause of this excruciating pain I am suffering?"

"With pleasure, Madam. I am positive the pain proceeds from a defective tooth. I shall gladly do all I can to relieve you, but will warn you that it must be drawn. I must be quick, as we are too dangerously near the enemy to admit of any loitering on the road." In the mean time, the Doctor had reached the veranda. Ferriby, having dexterously rolled out a large arm-chair on the southwest side of the veranda, Mrs. Willesly at once seated herself, bracing her nerves against a severe physical shock. The Doctor proceeded to examine, with professional skill, the afflicted member, when simultaneously with the application of the instrument they were rooted to the spot by a deafening roar and a blinding light overhead. A terrific explosion shook the earth. Ferriby, bounding like a cat into the air, gave vent to an ear-splitting shriek. Dr. Harding now stood in the posture of paralyzed astonishment as he held the reeking instrument at arm's length.

The children were sobbing, frantic with fright, while Adrienne stood with her face buried in her hands, and Mrs. Willesly clung to the arms of the chair, shaking in every limb.

"Doctor," she called in trembling tones, "have you really drawn my tooth?"

But another deafening explosion and blinding light put a stop to their breath a second. Speech, thought, and understanding seemed to have forsaken the little group. Ferriby, with chattering teeth, stood trembling, her eyes stretched wild, while her skin had turned an ashy hue. The Doctor, drawing long breaths of violent perturbations, looked round him half-dazed. But suddenly huddling together his belongings he found enough power of speech at last to express his "regrets" to Mrs. Willesly—though not in his natural voice—at being forced to leave them so unceremoniously, and striking out for his horse, the next moment was flying like the wind down the road, intent upon putting as long a distance between himself and the Union army as possible.

Mrs. Willesly and Adrienne could but resign themselves to what was to follow. Pale, silent, and agitated, they moved from place to place, knowing there was nothing but danger ahead of them, and during the entire day they were continually terrorized by the excessive cannonading and bursting shells.

CHAPTER XVII

The night of terror and suspense came to an end. Their eyes opened upon a serene and lovely morning—upon a summer landscape radiant in its beauty. The blur of smoke had disappeared from the deep blue vault of heaven, which was now clear and brilliant. Adrienne looked out upon the sparkling sunshine, rejoicing in the depths of her grateful soul to be alive. Lying on a leather lounge in the hall, where she had thrown herself almost in utter exhaustion, Mrs. Willesly was breathing thankfully the balmy air sweeping through from the open doors, as she drew a long, deep sigh of relief, and moved her lips in silent thanksgiving to have been spared to see a new day.

But presently she rose to her feet and ventured into the kitchen, to find Augie at her usual post, setting about preparations for breakfast.

“Augie,” and there seemed to be almost a hush in her voice as she spoke, “we are quite faint from the effects of our long fast. Give us a wholesome breakfast this morning.”

"Yes, Miss Helen, I will 'deavor to do so, 'ka'se you is lookin' powerful starved, an' white in de face."

"And our troubles are not over yet, Augie. How reckless of me to have refused Mrs. Borden's kind offer to take us with her. It is true, I should have deserted my home, but what is anything in comparison to the dreadful danger to which we are now hourly exposed?" She unconsciously wrung her hands as the tears trickled down her cheeks.

"Now, Miss Helen, you mus'n't take on so, honey. Mebbe times ain't bad as dey look."

"Alas, I can't help thinking our country has come to a pretty pass." And now dropping her hands disconsolately at her side, Mrs. Willesly walked slowly away, leaving Augie standing with arms akimbo, shaking vigorously her turbaned head as she looked after her Miss Helen and ruminated over the condition of things. But however concerned and perplexed Augie may have felt on account of the state of her Miss Helen's mind, the breakfast was soon smoking upon the table, daintily and deliciously prepared.

Just as the little family had finished the so much needed repast, a loud cry from Ferriby, who burst in upon them, "De Yankees, de Yankees, Miss Helen!" so startled them, that knives and forks were dropped on the table

without ceremony, as hastily rising from their seats they rushed out on the veranda to find, sure enough, the lawn overrun with Federal soldiers. At sight of them, Mrs. Willesly's wits suspended action a moment, but soon managing to rally, she went forward with as bold face as possible, timorously addressing the officer, who stood near with his back turned to them, her voice trembling in spite of the effort made at self-control.

"Will you kindly tell me the meaning of this?"

He turned at once, lifting his cap politely, saying,

"I will assure Madam that she need feel no uneasiness on *our* account. We have but stopped by to water our jaded horses at your pond, on our way to headquarters."

"Whose headquarters, may I ask?"

"General Grant's, Madam."

"Will there be a battle?"

"Our command is now preparing to fall in line."

Her face perceptibly paled at this, but she eagerly ventured again—

"Shall my residence be in danger?"

"I can give you no assurance to the contrary, Madam. One can never foresee the result of battle."

But, confused as her brain now felt, Mrs. Willesly fully grasped the situation, and running a thought quickly over in her mind, at once settled on a plan.

"Will it be asking too much of you to deliver a written message from myself to General Grant?"

The officer eyed her with curiosity a moment, then rather abruptly answered,

"I must warn you, Madam, that he may not have time to read or reply. Nevertheless, I will take your message at your request."

"Oh, thank you," and with trembling heart she vanished into the house. After the lapse of a few moments she was on the spot again with a sealed envelope in her hand, which she eagerly thrust into the officer's keeping, who rode away almost immediately, followed by his tired men. Then turning to Adrienne, who had been a silent witness to this dialogue, Mrs. Willesly said in anxious tones,

"I scarcely think General Grant will refuse my earnest appeal for protection in our sore need."

"Have you requested a special detachment of Union soldiers to guard your castle in the hour of great danger?" said Adrienne, a little glint of derision in her eyes.

"Surely," was the answer, a little surprised at the girl's tone. "You approve of what I have done?"

"Approve? Most certainly—in this crisis. But, Mrs. Willesly, I would prepare you for the answer, not at all consistent with the appeal." And not feeling in the humor for discussing the matter at length, Adrienne walked away.

But, greatly to her surprise, and Mrs. Willesly's relief, the answer came in two hours' time, which Mrs. Willesly read aloud to Adrienne, her hands quivering so that the paper shook.

"Dear Madam:

"In response to your appeal to me in this emergency, I will say, that in the stress of the hour I have only time to assure you that I have nothing to offer you in the way of refuge, save the protection of our boats. Should you conclude to retire to them the privilege is yours.

"Yours truly,

"U. S. Grant."

Mrs. Willesly sat unconsciously twisting the note between her fingers, thinking profoundly, while a shade of disappointment and worry had fallen over her face. Presently raising her eyes to Adrienne, she said mournfully,

"I am sure it is not at all clear to me, as to what I *did* expect. Not *this*, certainly. Yet," and she sighed deeply, "surrounded as we are on all sides by the enemy, and completely cut off from retreat among friends, what else is there to do but accept the only offer of assistance open to one?"

"Surely, Mrs. Willesly!" Adrienne exclaimed with a mutinous look in her eyes, "you are not contemplating a retreat to the gunboats?"

"Why not? As whistling bullets are not in the least to my fancy, nor in my line of duty to face, I shall proceed to hunt a place of safety with as little loss of time as possible. For, in our present condition, every hour is precious."

A moment of silence followed, in which it needed no inspiration to convince Adrienne that it would be unwise, in her present position, stubbornly to oppose Mrs. Willesly's judgment and authority. Prudently maintaining a smoothness of manner, she resignedly set to work making preparations for a speedy departure.

Desperate at thought of being hemmed in between two armies in hostile positions, exposed to the din and carnage of the conflict, Mrs. Willesly gave herself no time to think of the gravity of the move she was about to make, but at once ordered their baggage placed in a

spring wagon and wheeled off to the river. Shortly after, with Adrienne, the children, and Ferriby close behind, they filed out to the waiting carriage in solemn procession, encountering on the way Augie and Aunt Polly, who had stationed themselves near, and were now weeping, no doubt with sincere devotion for their mistress.

"Look here, Miss Helen, is you an' de young Mistis took pris'ners?" whispered Aunt Polly. "My po' ole heart is sho' akin' to see you leavin' home in *dis* fashion."

"We are not prisoners, Aunt Polly. But we are going—" she hesitated between a sob and a sigh—"because—we don't know what else we can do. Meantime, Aunt Polly, while I am gone you will overlook the place for me and look after yourselves. You can have the provisions in the smoke-house and anything else you may need. Good-by." She could say no more, but received a hearty pledge from her faithful servants that on her return she would find them at their post, true to the trust she had placed in them.

The carriage drove off, the soldier who had brought the message from General Grant, as envoy.

CHAPTER XVIII

The journey to the river was sad and dismal, of which Mrs. Willesly gave expression by a copious shower of tears behind her veil. Adrienne, on the other hand, did not shed a tear, nor did she speak a single word, but sat silently brooding over the fact that as they progressed on the road there had been no sign of either Federal or Confederate soldiers. Convinced the Confederates had fallen back and that General Grant was in hot pursuit, a flood of dread and distress surged through the girl's soul, while, at thought of what the consequences might be, she scarcely restrained her tears.

The carriage now reaching the edge of the woodland overlooking the river, the huge battle-ships lying out in bold relief on the water, coming into full view, struck dismay to their hearts. And presently, as they waded deeper into difficulties, upon beholding the interior of one of these gigantic floating arsenals, they were all the more struck with shivering dread at thus being consigned to impregnable walls of iron, seemingly in their helpless condition truly a prison-house. The occasion demanded

a wonderful amount of courage and heroism to withstand the hopeless outlook ahead of them.

Adrienne sank upon the nearest seat in the cabin, giving herself up, for the moment, to an irresistible melancholy, wistfully bending her eyes before her—a suspicion of tears on their lashes—praying in her heart that the light of hope might break in upon her soul and release her of this horrible dread of danger. The entire little circle, now sitting round in stiff chairs, betrayed an unnatural calm, by no means resembling the serene quiet that usually hovered over their peaceful fireside at home. A little over the way the sable Ferriby, having stationed herself beside the children, presented a picture of big-eyed curiosity, now starting at every sound. But as night came on, tired nature succumbed to the much-needed rest. Adrienne, for a while at least, was oblivious to harrowing doubt and anxious care. However, upon waking, she was more alive than ever to the uncertainty of their condition, while her thoughts constantly reverted to Colonel Strafford, whom she felt certain was hourly exposed to danger and death. She little dreamed that during the night, as he was crossing the river from the Louisiana side in a narrow punt, he came so near the ship in which she lay sweetly slumbering, that reaching out he could have touched

the side with his oar. A skilled oarsman from his English training, by dexterous sweeps he skimmed over the water, soon bringing the prow of his boat safely to land under the shades of night, so making good his escape that, shortly after, he reached Richmond with his mission satisfactorily accomplished.

But the moments lengthened into hours—hours into days, and as yet General Grant had not appeared on the scene. In the mean while, with the passing on of time, Mrs. Willesly, having grown restless, her daily vocation had become a ceaseless promenade to and fro, keeping it up with unabated energy.

Once as she was passing in the neighborhood of Adrienne, she suddenly paused and said, with manifest irritation,

“Do you know, Adrienne, that if I had not seen with my own eyes the pallor on your face, and quiver on your lips, I should have concluded long since that you are *flinty* in your nature. For my part, if this state of things keeps up much longer I shall cry out in sheer despair. Our situation is becoming more insupportable every hour. The death sentence hanging over us at home has been commuted to life imprisonment on this cruel ship. In vulgar parlance, we have but jumped out of the frying pan into the fire.”

"Ah," said Adrienne, now giving way to a low, musical laugh, though Mrs. Willesly observed the tears in her eyes, "I must confess that ever since General Grant's ready compliance with your appeal for protection, I have been stretched upon the rack of devouring curiosity. For I am convinced to have secured so promptly the answer to your petition, you must have employed a more potent argument than has appeared in evidence."

"I don't mind acknowledging, since the deed is done," she answered, now dropping into a confidential attitude, "that I called into effect no mystic influence, nor flattering blandishments, as an avenue to General Grant's clemency; but merely a bold statement of one student's attachment for the other in the days of their alma mater, which bringing the benevolent result, proves successfully that he was inclined to hear my prayer for protection in the hour of our great need and danger. I will confide to you, Adrienne, that my father and General Grant were classmates at college, closely linked together by an indissoluble bond of friendship."

CHAPTER XIX

The morning following this conversation, Adrienne woke wretchedly depressed, and impressed with a feeling that something was about to befall their fortunes. Anything but blind to their peril, the gravity of their situation weighed heavily upon her spirits. But upon making a tardy appearance among her fellow-sufferers, she was greeted by the unexpected news that the ship was now lying off from Vicksburg, which filled her mind with dire perplexity and gave her heart uneasy throbs as she sat down to shape her thoughts into some reasonable conclusion. Presently the approach of footsteps roused her from her sober reflections, and drew her from her drooping posture, and raising her eyes, they fell on an officer, tired and travel-worn, whose reserved mien bespoke his identity. Coming slowly on he paused before Mrs. Willesly, and bowed, as he said, with a weary smile,

“Have I the pleasure of addressing Mrs. Willesly, my late correspondent?”

“I am indeed glad to see you, General Grant,” was the alert, cheerful reply; “while you cannot

understand the genuine relief your presence brings with it."

"And you are the daughter of my old school-fellow, Charles Somers?" he asked reflectively.

"Your name, General Grant, from my youth up, has been as familiar as household words."

"Ah," said he, and there was an inflection of honest feeling and sympathy in his voice, "Charles Somers was a noble, whole-souled man, and a loyal friend. Fate has willed it that, while I am left to 'do battle with inexorable war,' feeling that it is well we are not standing on opposite ground, he has entered upon his journey in the happy Beyond, and who knows how soon I may join him?"

Noticing the General's eyes had wandered to the silent girl sitting near, Mrs. Willesly took advantage of the first lull in conversation to say, as she introduced him to Adrienne,

"My young friend here, General, has been detained some length of time, waiting an opportunity to go to her grandfather, who resides on the Potomac in Virginia."

The General seemed to be thinking deeply as he sat observing the beauty of the girl's sad face, while he made no direct reply to Mrs. Willesly. But presently, his face lighting up with a smile, he said,

"Ladies, I shall now propose a remedy for your present unfortunate position, in so far as

it may rest in my power to accomplish it. In an hour's time a steamer, now ready to start, will leave for Memphis, in which I suggest that you shall take passage, where you will be placed in more comfortable quarters, and will be out of the range of danger. Allow me to suggest that you should make your preparations at once, as the boat will be here shortly that will transfer you in safety from the ship to the packet. Miss de Courcelles," now turning and smiling pleasantly down upon the girl, which suddenly dispelled the gathering tears in her eyes and the gnawing anxiety at her heart, "I must say, from the fact that I have a daughter of my own, your position appeals to me; therefore, I shall keep you in mind, and arrange as early as possible to place you on the road so that you may reach your grandfather without difficulty. Though it would be well to bear in mind that the campaign in Virginia is one of continuous action, and growing more heated every day." The General moved toward Mrs. Willesly, holding out his hand and saying,

"Though we have met under peculiar circumstances, Mrs. Willesly, I wish to assure you of the pleasure it has afforded me to make the acquaintance of the daughter of my old school-fellow and friend Charles Somers. Allow me to express my sincere regret at the untoward position in which you have been placed by the

fortunes of war. I hope soon to be able to send you safely back to your homes." And with a cordial good-by to each of the ladies, General Grant, under the relentless call and pressure of business, hurried away.

An hour later they were skimming over the quiet flowing water in the open sunshine. The morning was so clear and splendid the gloom lifted from Adrienne's heart, in spite of the terror through which she had passed. Her heart now swelling with thanksgiving at their sudden and miraculous escape from the monster gunboat, she was simply beside herself with joy.

Mrs. Willesly, on the other hand, now sitting in the boat, with bowed head, gazing into the mirror-like surface of the water while her tears unconsciously mingled with the passing ripples, seemed to have settled into a silent melancholy. When, all at once, glancing up and encountering the girl's grave, sympathetic eyes resting upon her, she repeated,

"'Regrets!' can regrets, Adrienne, restore to me my home—which I know has been sacrificed—with its crowded associations of a happy past? I am convinced by the unhappy experience through which we have passed, Adrienne, that it is indeed vain to put one's trust in anything in this transitory world, one is so suddenly and rudely sent adrift."

“Why take such a gloomy view of the matter? Have we not cause to rejoice that we are now breathing the free air of heaven?” And turning her face toward Vicksburg, now standing out in clear relief in the shimmering morning sunshine, the girl continued, with a little tremulous catch in her voice, “I am sure, even though we are still in the toils of the enemy, we would not care to exchange places with the inhabitants of that city, whose sorrows are just begun. The sufferings in store for them will yet enlist perhaps every compassionate throb of our hearts.”

As the steamer presently swung out in mid stream, heading for Memphis, Mrs. Willesly and Adrienne felt that the sudden transition from the barriers of a stupendous iron-clad battle-ship to the sunny, airy quarters of a Mississippi River floating palace was a matter over which there was call for earnest gratitude and self-gratulation.

CHAPTER XX

"Adrienne," cried Mrs. Willesly, suddenly entering the girl's room one morning in Memphis, where they were putting up at a popular hotel, "do you know that after you left the table just now I chanced to overhear those officers, who sit near us at table, discussing the siege which, it seems, is now in progress at Vicksburg, and was so overcome at the news, that unable to control my emotion, tears ran down my cheeks, dropping like great white beads into my lap. But observing my agitation they immediately changed the subject. Nevertheless, the unhappy fact remains, of which I have hurried up here to let you know."

"We are entirely helpless in the matter, Mrs. Willesly, and can only appeal to our stock of resolution to be patient in waiting, and ever maintain an unbroken faith in the One who has promised succor in the hour of danger and distress." Adrienne was standing before a mirror, carefully arranging a veil over her hat and face, preparatory to going into the street.

"Seeing you veiling yourself so carefully, Adrienne, reminds me that we are manifestly

objects of curiosity to the officers in this hotel, however much they strive against staring rudely."

"But as yet," the girl answered, smiling brightly, "we have no cause for resentment. And now, try and rouse yourself from this semi-stupor, and watch eagerly for an early deliverance from our troubles and difficulties. Perhaps our release is nearer than we have any idea. Good-by for the present. I will soon be back, and hope to find you, on my return, with your usual spirits restored." Nodding brightly, Adrienne left the room, starting out on the perplexing mission of having a dress fitted, a traveling outfit of a subdued, lovely shade of gray, in exchange for the somberness of her mourning garb, of which she had lately grown excessively weary.

Upon her passages through the lobby of the hotel, Adrienne had frequently noticed an officer, who invariably occupied the same position, engrossed in the morning paper. His eyes, as she moved gracefully on her way, never failed to dwell upon her with unconscious admiration. This morning in particular, finding the aisle obstructed by luggage, she was forced nearer the officer, whose "pardon me," as he rose to let her pass, drew a hurried glance from the girl's dark eyes up into his. She was struck by something familiar—something in

his accent and bearing that unmistakably denoted the high-bred Englishman.

At length the catastrophe of the fall of Vicksburg was known by the jollity of the officers in the hotel over the great Federal victory. Mrs. Willesly, with sinking heart, poured forth her sorrow in rivers of tears. None the less overwhelmed at the depressing fall that seemed to over-shadow the destiny of the South, Adrienne gave expression of her sorrow and distress alone by a silence eloquent in its sadness and mournful regret. This disaster in the fortunes of the Confederate cause left in its wake in their hearts a dull apathy. Indeed, soon they began dimly to realize, with fear and dismay, that the chain of oppression was already forged that would fasten the South upon the pages of history a victim to overwhelming numbers.

Sitting alone in her room one morning, Adrienne was suddenly roused by a quick tap at the door, and a servant entered, presenting a card upon which was the name, "E. Havelock, Lieutenant, U. S. A.," with the accompanying request to see Miss de Courcelles in the parlor a moment on business.

She rose, and walked in a kind of dream to the parlor. The unknown officer, rising and bowing at her entrance, her surprise was complete, while he scarcely veiled the admiration elicited by her loveliness.

"Miss de Courcelles, I suppose?"

A graceful bend of the head was her only answer. As they seated themselves, he went on to say,

"I have been authorized to inform you that I am commissioned by General Grant to escort you under a flag of truce into the Confederate lines, and there place you on the road far enough to reach your friends in Virginia in safety—without any fear of molestation or difficulty."

Evidently greatly relieved, as well as overjoyed at this piece of unexpected good news, she replied with a frank smile,

"Assuredly, General Grant has my grateful acknowledgments for so much kindly consideration toward one who is an entire stranger. I shall always remember him with deepest gratitude. But I am sure it would puzzle older heads than my own to know how to dispose of such an emergency. However, I shall act according to what I deem for the best, and trust all will go well." She rose from her seat. Rising also, he said with a courtly manner,

"Will Miss de Courcelles allow me to assure her that, though she is at present in the hands of the hostile section, it is the vow of knight-hood to protect a lady in distress. I would sug-

gest, Miss de Courcelles, that the uncertainty of war demands that we should leave as early as possible."

"If you wish, I can be ready for the early morning train."

Bowing acquiescence, Lieutenant Havelock withdrew, simply intoxicated with the girl's beauty and charm of manner, never having seen her before without the protection of a veil. In the early morning a carriage was standing at the entrance of the hotel, when presently Adrienne made her appearance. She wore a gray traveling dress, with hat to correspond, and looked so charming that one might be pardoned for an almost rude admiration. The children were clinging to her skirts, and the indispensable Ferriby, an interested party, followed closely behind. Preferring not to make a public exhibition of her tears, Mrs. Willesly parted from Adrienne in the privacy of her own room, congratulating herself that she too would take her departure on the morrow for the more congenial atmosphere of her native New Orleans.

Lieutenant Havelock was promptly on time, and the next moment they were whirling swiftly on to the morning train, having left the children on the side-walk sobbing out their sorrow in childish, heart-broken lamentations,

Ferriby, with much parade, making strenuous effort to quiet their distress.

This early departure had not escaped the notice of several officers in the hotel, who gazed from their windows down upon the officer and young lady as they entered the carriage and were driven away. And certainly they could not be censured for the little impulse of envy that assailed them toward Lieutenant Havelock. That he should have been appointed envoy to so lovely a creature they deemed in itself a mark of distinction, and one they scarce dared hope would fall in their line of duty.

Noting that the whole cast of Lieutenant Havelock's countenance was distinctly pleasing, and inviting to confidence, was of infinite relief to the girl sitting opposite him. He conversed in a versatile, entertaining way, seeking unobtrusively to attend to her few wants. Nevertheless, observing that he invariably alluded to the Southerners as "rebels," her patience finally arrived at a limit, as presently turning to him, she said, with rising color,

"I am certain, Lieutenant Havelock, by your manner of expression—though I have no intention of setting you right in the matter—that you are laboring under the weight of an error in regard to the integral workings which have resulted in this national disaster. I will do you the justice, however, to say that perhaps you

have joined the contest against the South inflated with the thrilling sentiment of saving the grand American Union, while the majority have been carried away by the exhilarating idea of freeing the slaves. Though it is true the South is in no way responsible for the origin of the institution, it is but just to concede the fact that the race, under discipline and control, has made rapid advances toward Christian civilization."

"I am satisfied, Miss de Courcelles, the South is sincere in maintaining its position, though to a disinterested onlooker there would seem room for inquiry. At any rate, I trust the difficulty may soon be adjusted. While, pardon me, I shall make a little confession. I have arrayed myself on the Federal side of the contest, not through any rancor toward the South, but simply for adventure. It is true, the enthusiasm of friends, with whom I happened to be visiting when war was declared, swayed me in a measure. I joined the army ostensibly to fight for the Union."

"Ah, Lieutenant, as I am thoroughly in touch with the purity and authority of the principles of the Southern people, I can assure you their fidelity to the Union has ever been loyal and unwavering, but their attachment was for the *spirit* that dominated the hearts of our forefathers, and guided them in formulating and

adopting the Constitution. As matters stood between the North and South, war was the inevitable result. For, is anything so monstrous as a country compromising its principles by yielding unreservedly to the dictation of the aggressor? This, had it complied with Mr. Lincoln's demand of unconditional surrender, would have been the position of the South. His idea of restoration, in his own words, was the immediate disbanding of the Confederate armies, allowing the National authorities to resume their functions."

"Apart from the motive to which I have already alluded, Miss de Courcelles, I have taken no pains to delve into the pros and cons of the matter. But of this fact I am certain, the Confederate ranks are weakening every day. How will you accept utter defeat?"

Her cheeks suddenly paled as she answered in solemn tones,

"It will indeed be a crowning sorrow! A stricken country, by conquest of overwhelming numbers, does not indeed settle the moral right of a question. A principle is indestructible."

CHAPTER XXI

Having succeeded beyond his most sanguine expectation in placing his charge under the protecting wing of the Confederate authorities at Chattanooga,—all of whom received her with marked courtesy, expressing ungrudgingly a willingness to promote her interest in every way,—Lieutenant Havelock sought Adrienne at once to say good-by, and found her sitting at a window in the parlor looking down on the ceaseless procession of passers in the street. She turned at once as she saw him coming forward with a look of thoughtful gravity on his face.

“Miss de Courcelles,” he said, his tone plainly tinged with regret, “I have come to say my mission, so far as you are concerned, is at an end. But now that I must leave you, I wish to assure you of the pleasure our little tilts in conversation have afforded me. My prayer is for peace throughout the United States, over which must float victoriously the National flag, and that we may soon meet again.”

“Perhaps, Lieutenant”—she looked at him with a faintly ironical smile in her eyes—“you wish your words to bear the impress of prophecy. I do not intend leading you into a dis-

cussion, but will say that, however pleased I should be to meet you again, I should object to the ground upon which you mention our meeting must take place. Profiting by your example, I must declare my undying faith in the final triumph of the Confederate cause when it shall have been transformed into an independent and prosperous government."

"I see," he laughed, "you are not to be persuaded, and, at heart, are a rebel to the core."

"I am only reasonable and consistent," she answered, smiling brightly. "I thank you, Lieutenant Havelock, for your kind attention and trouble; and though I am anxious the South should succeed, I sincerely pray you may not meet your fate through the deadly aim of a Confederate ball."

"I am convinced, Miss de Courcelles, you are at least a generous foe. In parting, allow me to say that I have a prophetic feeling that our next meeting is not far distant; and now that you are going where the country is continually under the blaze of gunpowder, I would urge you to be constantly on your guard. Good-by." Turning, without another word, he walked steadily out of the room, the military ring of his step reaching her ears until it had died away in the distance.

The task of traveling alone Adrienne had undertaken with considerable qualms. Realiz-

ing, however, there could be no turning back, she pushed forward unfalteringly in her determination to reach her destination.

Upon reaching Richmond she was gravely advised by the authorities of the difficulties she would perhaps encounter on the road. But fortunately, discovering that a reconnoitering cavalry squad was on the eve of moving toward the Potomac, she sought at once to place herself under the protection of the gallant captain, who readily agreed to guard her, even to the neighborhood of her grandfather's residence, whose staunch principles and unstinted hospitality, he assured her, had a wide reputation.

A carriage having been procured for Adrienne's personal accommodation, and a spring wagon for her baggage, they started off, with the Captain and his men riding far in advance of the carriage, though never long out of sight.

Unable to resist the consciousness of her lonely condition, Adrienne felt as tranquil as could be expected in view of the uncertain nature of her journey, and was glad, as the evening shadows were darkening into night, when the entire convoy halted on the outskirts of a small hamlet, before a plain, substantial residence, at the gate of which stood a woman whom the Captain supposed was the lady of the house. After a short interview he gave

Adrienne into her charge, who smilingly welcomed the girl, though with considerable curiosity as she removed her hat and veil, revealing her beautiful face. Comfortable quarters were placed at the Captain's disposal for his men, and the two drivers were safely housed. Presently there was spread before the hungry travelers a memorable supper, for which the old Virginia kitchen is so celebrated. An undisturbed night's rest followed. They rose with the early dawn and were soon en route. Their progress over roads channeled and rutted by constant travel of army supply wagons, proved anything but easy going, and Adrienne naturally concluded she would indeed have cause to be thankful if she should get through the day without any broken bones. She was resting confidently on the word an untried stranger had given, and congratulated herself that at the passing of every mile-stone she was surely nearing her destination.

As the rays of the sun slanted long, and they were driving through a region of tall forest trees, the dreamy, peaceful hour disturbed alone by the notes of a sweet-singing bird, making itself heard above the slight noise of the wheels, all at once, to her intense amazement, as she leaned against the carriage window looking out at the passing scenery, she descried a cavalcade of soldiers coming toward them in a swift,

sweeping charge. Her heart sprang into her throat, as quick, furious firing instantly followed. The carriage stopped short. The driver sprang to his feet, and with a look of terror on his ebony face exclaimed, "By gosh!" and leaping over the wheels disappeared as though the ground had swallowed him, before the affrighted girl half-realized his intention. Simply overcome with terror by the plunging, panting, snorting horses,—though they made no attempt to run,—she scarcely had the strength to force open the door and scramble to the ground, where she stood trying to meet death as bravely as possible.

But a sudden silence fell where, but a moment ago, there had been confusion and tumult of battle. Failing to comprehend the issue, and scarcely conscious of what she was doing, Adrienne kept her place, a look of pain still shining in her eyes and her face white as death, while her sweet, sensitive lips looked as though carved in marble. Happily, there was a diversion by the Captain's sudden appearance, who rode up and dismounted. But as he glanced quickly round he exclaimed,

"Your driver, Miss de Courcelles—what has become of him? Surely you have not been alone during this little ordeal?"

"Alas!" was the answer, the suspicion of a tremor in her low tones, "at first sound of the guns he fled, completely panic-stricken."

"The cowardly rascal!" He looked down into the girl's white face, his eyes singularly gentle and sympathetic. "But, Miss de Courcelles, you must understand that I acted purely on the defensive, and would not, of my own free choice, have exposed you to the uproar and danger of this little skirmish."

The Captain now stood leaning against his horse, fanning himself vigorously with his cap.

"It seems marvelous," was the low, constrained reply, "that one soul should have escaped such deadly firing. And certainly, Captain, you could not have been on your guard against so sudden an attack."

"A soldier, Miss de Courcelles, is always ready for battle. Apart from the fright it must have occasioned *you*, I cannot deny that I enjoyed the little fracas with considerable zest!" his swarthy face and black eyes lighting up with a peculiar flash of feeling.

"Is it so, Captain, that you soldiers actually enjoy thrusting your sword through an enemy? How one's blood curdles at the mere thought of the cruelty of war. But, tell me, was any one wounded or killed?"

"Strange to say, the only serious sufferer is the Union officer who led the charge, and who

is so severely wounded that I must bestir myself and get him on the road to a safe asylum and a surgeon."

"If you should need a conveyance," said she graciously, "this carriage is at your disposal."

"What," he exclaimed, "sacrifice your convenience to the comfort of a stranger, and an enemy!"

"He is a human being, in a critical condition. I can travel the remaining distance in the little wagon with my trunks. Do not refuse, Captain, but hasten, lest the shock and loss of blood will be too much for him."

He was convinced by her frank smile, and mounting his horse, rode away, muttering to himself, "An extraordinarily unselfish young lady."

Left to herself, Adrienne looked about her, and selecting a nice leafy spot on the side of the road, seated herself to wait the Captain's return. Suddenly the sound of creaking wheels caught her ear, and the next moment, creeping round a clump of trees in a bend of the road, came the little wagon jogging along. The old darky had been taking his own time over the rough, rutty road, which had been fortunate for Adrienne. For, had he been on hand at the time of the skirmish, she would have been minus another driver.

The prisoners presently came filing by under guard. At sight of the officer's limp, drooping figure, half-reclining in the carriage, and his face faint and white as death, a feeling of sublime pity filled Adrienne's soul. She could scarcely repress the tears of sympathy that sprang to her eyes. But the Captain, bringing up the rear, now dismounted at her side.

"Miss de Courcelles," said he, "I hate to interfere with your comfort and start you off on another processional march, but the sooner you are under shelter the better. We must not waste time; so, allow me," and he assisted her with care to the little back seat in the wagon, and the next moment they were driving ahead, bumping, swaying, and jolting along regardless of her nerves and powers of endurance. As they progressed laboriously on the way Adrienne felt incapable almost of lucid thought. Trembling at every fleeting shadow in which she felt danger lurked, she seemed to have just gotten rid of the clutch of some horrible nightmare. The day having settled into twilight, fire-flies flashed in and out among the bushes grouped by the road-side.

On account of Adrienne's presence, the soldiers were pushing steadily forward to a place of safety, feeling the responsibility of so delicate a charge. Besides, knowing they were

not safe from another attack, they wished to be free to do effectual work.

But as the wagon was now groping its way through the darkness, all at once it came to a violent halt. The old darky, starting to his feet, exclaimed in gasping tones of smothered horror.

"Good Gawd! young Missus, who *is* dem I hears a talkin'?"

"Drive on, and we shall see," she said curtly.

"Now, young Missus," he answered squeamishly, "de good Lawd knows you is suttinly furgittin' de sponserbility I be fetchin' on me-se'f by carryin' you into trouble." And stolidly settling himself on the seat, he refused to budge another inch.

Compelled to submit, Adrienne sat thinking intensely. She began to shiver with nameless dread as a creepy feeling of fear came over her. Straining her eyes into the Egyptian darkness, suddenly she seemed to distinguish the dim outline of figures a few paces off, and the next moment hearing the Captain's deep bass voice in earnest conversation with a woman whose tones of culture and refinement revealed to her that she was a lady, she listened as the lady assured the Captain that she had been lurking in the woods in the hope of his passing that way, solely to warn him of a conspiracy on foot to capture him that night with his company.

"I have been contriving all day, Captain," she added, "some method of giving you and those concerned, a timely alarm."

"Mere words, Miss Preston, are weak to fully express my appreciation of your brave, unselfish act, which amounts to the saving of myself and men." And there was no mistaking the deep note of gratitude in the Captain's voice. However, the sound of Adrienne's name from the Captain's lips, as he proceeded to explain to the lady her presence and dependence on himself for protection, almost took the girl's breath away. But the prompt reply—a cool proposal by the lady to undertake the Captain's responsibility and pilot his charge, the country being familiar, the remaining distance to her grandfather, whom, she declared, she knew well from character—though it struck the girl with astonishment, was of infinite relief to her as she sat quietly in the dark, and she had not yet recovered from her surprise when they came up.

"I was certain, Miss de Courcelles," said the Captain, cheerfully, "you were somewhere near. This is Miss Preston, who has expressed a desire to help you in this strenuous hour."

"I am only too thankful," came the eager, cordial reply, just as they caught sight of one another's face by the flash of a match struck by the Captain across his boot heel, "for Miss Pres-

ton's charitable offer of assistance. Miss Preston, you can not know how happy your kindness has made me."

"I suppose I may say, Miss de Courcelles, that you have practically accomplished your journey," the Captain said, now assisting Miss Preston to the seat beside Adrienne. "And I assure you, as I leave you in good hands, that it will not be long before you shall have reached the end of your road in safety."

"Ah, Captain," she said, an unsteady note in the low tones, "now that I must bid you adieu, allow me to thank you so earnestly for all the kindness you have shown me in this sore need. I shall ever remember you, Captain, with feelings of warmest gratitude."

"I do not desire thanks for protecting a lady in distress. And hereafter, Miss de Courcelles, should you find yourself driven into difficulties, an appeal to me shall meet with prompt response. I will now say good-by to you both, praying you may steer safe from all breakers on your journey."

Starting them off on the road leading to the home of Miss Preston, the Captain took the opposite direction, plunging into the blackness of the forest beyond to join his company.

CHAPTER XXII

On a broad white turnpike, amid the soft, sweet gloaming, a droll-looking little wagon came lagging along, drawn by a lazy horse, whose halting gait plainly told of his readiness to give up the race. The old darky, trying in vain to mend his pace by an unsparing application of the whip, finally yielded droopingly to the existing state of things.

Two young ladies, sitting on the back seat of the wagon, were making the best of their cramped condition by conversing upon various subjects, thus dragging the weary hours by. Adrienne, however, leaned back and listened, while Miss Preston did most of the talking. At last, reaching a dirt road leading off from the turnpike, Miss Preston directed the driver to turn aside and follow it. But a short distance, and they came to a large white gate, through which they passed into an extensive park-like enclosure. Sitting some distance back among the trees, revealed by the light of the moon, was an imposing Colonial residence supported by immense fluted columns, its glimmering lights from the window up-stairs plainly in sight. The travelers were soon out of the wagon,

traversing in silence the broad gravel drive leading up to the main entrance. Miss Preston, who was a little in advance of Adrienne, passed up the steps and rang the bell, which was promptly answered by a sedate looking old colored major-domo, who, upon Miss Preston's request to see Mr. Stanley, conducted them through a wide lofty hall into an elegant drawing-room, where they were asked to be seated in luxurious chairs.

Adrienne, in view of the coming meeting with her grandfather, sat nervous and trembling. Presently, footsteps were heard approaching, and at once there appeared in the door a stately looking old gentleman, attired in black. His white hair, thrown loosely back from his brow, revealed a scholarly looking face, lighted up by a pair of alert, incisive eyes. Advancing a few steps into the room, he stood a moment glancing from one to the other. But as Adrienne made no attempt to meet him, Miss Preston, feeling compelled to come to her rescue, moved forward with extended hand, smiling graciously as she said,

"Mr. Stanley, you do not know me, but I have heard of you so often I feel I know you quite well. I am Miss Preston, almost a neighbor of yours, from a county not far off. This is my friend Miss de Courcelles, recently from Mississippi, who has been separated from

her friends by an unfortunate train of circumstances, and providentially falling into my care I have taken her under my protecting wing."

At mention of Adrienne's name, a chord of memory in Mr. Stanley's brain began to vibrate, and fixing his eyes upon her he repeated her name in a whisper, then suddenly aloud, in much agitation, he said,

"That name, with your striking resemblance to her, could belong to no other than her own child, my dear." Now approaching the quivering girl, "Are you my granddaughter?"

"My mother was Grace Stanley." But her sentence was finished in the arms of her grandfather, who held her in a close, tender embrace, saying in broken accents,

"Is it so, my prayer is answered at last? My child, I have been hard, but I have deeply repented, though I realize it is too late for *her* to know."

"I am certain my mother could not have died with any bitterness in her heart toward her own father. Knowing your generous nature so well, I am certain she looked forward to your forgiveness in the end, even though she had to die without hearing it from your lips."

"I must confess, my dear, to have had very little control over my blind prejudices at that period in my life, which was ever my besetting sin. But lengthening years have given me time

to reflect, and realize wherein I have been seriously at fault. Tell me of your father, my child. Where is he at present?"

She glanced up into his keen eyes, smiling frankly, and feeling there was nothing mysterious nor subtle in the answer she had to give in reference to one who, she knew so well, had not been fortunate enough to possess a place in the favor of this stately old gentleman.

"My father is now residing in Cairo, Egypt. His health was almost a complete wreck at the time of his leaving the United States, but a continued residence in the dry, invigorating climate of the East seems to have restored his shattered strength, and I do not think he could now be induced to exchange his foreign home for one on this side. Through my father's desire to have me educated in my native land accounts for my being at present in the United States. But as early as there is a safe opportunity I shall join him at Cairo, where he proposes we shall live permanently."

"Now, my child, how came you *here*? For, see, we are but a stone's throw from the Union army."

"Ah, grandfather," she said, with a winning smile, "could you have seen the picturesque manner in which I have entered the sacred precincts of your home, you would congratulate me on my temerity, and be convinced that

naught but direst necessity could have driven me to such an expedience. I will explain that it was only a short while ago, on a bright and beautiful morning, my friend, Mrs. Willesly (who is a daughter of my guardian), and myself were driven for refuge in the hour of danger to the Federal battle-ships."

"Then you were taken prisoners?"

"It was purely the accident of war, I am sure, grandfather. Though our detention was unpleasant, it could not have been designated so harshly."

But insisting that she should begin at the beginning and give a circumstantial account of her experience, Mr. Stanley placed his head in a comfortable position on the cushioned back of his chair, thus declaring himself an interested audience.

Adrienne related it all in as few words as possible, and when she had finished her grandfather turned to her in a most affectionate manner and said,

"My dear, I am happy and thankful to afford you all the protection in my power. But you will soon comprehend, alas! how entirely we are in the hands and at the mercy of the enemy."

The short silence that followed was suddenly broken by the appearance of a young lady, who had advanced some few paces into the room, when, perceiving Adrienne, she stopped abrupt-

ly, regarding her with unfeigned astonishment. While the undisguised surprise and constraint manifested toward each other by the two ladies at once awakened in Mr. Stanley's mind a feeling of keenest curiosity. He rose from his chair, turning to the young lady, and saying questioningly,

"Belle, I judge by your manner that you have seen this young lady before."

"Yes, grandfather," in curt tones, "I remember once to have met Miss de Courcelles in New Orleans." And vouchsafing a distant bow to Adrienne, she turned to quit the room.

"Hold," said Mr. Stanley, throwing out his hand with a formal, dignified gesture, "I have something to say that will surprise you even more than the young lady's presence in this room. Miss de Courcelles is your cousin, and my granddaughter."

"Is it possible!" she gasped. "Why, there is not a drop of Stanley blood apparent in her features."

"She has her father's complexion, it is true, but her expression is all her mother's." And he now contemplated Adrienne's beautiful face, while the girl herself had drawn the conclusion from Miss Conrad's behavior that this revelation had been exceedingly distasteful, and her lips accordingly had become proud and tremulous.

"I am not responsible for the connection, Miss Conrad," she said to the young lady, coolly and firmly, "and will assure you my presence in my grandfather's house shall not exceed an hour over a safe opportunity of getting away."

"Tut, tut, my dears, this show of animosity between two, who should be friends at least, is exceedingly irregular. It is a lady's province to be free from vindictiveness." Mr. Stanley's voice was stirred with emotion. But ere the words had left his lips, Miss Conrad, with a proud poise of the head, had swept from the room, Adrienne immediately approached her grandfather with sweet humility and dignity, as she said,

"I regret so much, grandfather, to have annoyed you; and believe me, in the future I shall try never to give you cause to complain."

"I would have you overcome this foolish pride, my child, which will only bring you a harvest of misery in time to come. Amiability is an indispensable ingredient in a young lady's temperament. I must say that I deplore having seen this ugly little weakness in Belle's character, and shall take it on myself to remonstrate with her seriously in regard to the matter."

Adrienne's room that night commanded a view of the Potomac, beyond which the bright watch-fires in the Union camp in the distance, throwing a red glare over the dome of the sky,

so charmed and fascinated her, that as she stood watching the attractive picture, unconscious of the passing hours, the chime of twelve o'clock from the lower hall startled her from her idle dreams and sent her to bed. The chilling encounter with Miss Conrad still weighing on her spirits, she presently unconsciously exclaimed aloud, "Is there no escape from enemies without, and the menace of one within?"

Miss Preston, having been a surprised, silent witness to this little family drama, naturally felt interested to see it played out to the finale, of which, however, by the appearance of a few Confederate scouts, under whose protection she felt forced to place herself on her return home, she was denied. En route, she fell to thinking of the discovery she had made. She felt that Miss Conrad's open dislike for Adrienne was purely based upon the ground of the young lady's consciousness of Adrienne's indefinable charm, that invariably captivated those with whom she came in contact.

The days moved swiftly on. Meantime, as nothing could exceed Miss Conrad's displeasure and chagrin at the appearance of this new cousin, she kept up the same cool, unbroken front, a barrier the girl in no way felt disposed to overstep, while she had had occasion to know that her grandfather had carried out his threat to reprove the young lady in round terms.

But as there had been no change in Miss Conrad's proudly polite manner toward the "intruding cousin," through sympathy, though not often given to sentiment, there had begun to grow in the heart of this old gentleman an earnest, tender affection for this singularly lonely and lovely girl. Consequently, Adrienne often found herself accompanying her grandfather on his accustomed morning drives in the neighborhood.

"I find, my dear," he said, as they were leisurely trotting along on the turnpike, "the more I stay indoors the less interest I seem to take in outside affairs, therefore I force myself to go as a defense against any morbid attack."

For Adrienne the two events of the day were the morning drive with her grandfather and the reveille in the Union camp in the evening. It was impossible to resist the roll of the drum, that never failed to draw her to the window, where, plainly in view, at a distance, the grassy slopes were white with hundreds of tents, making a scene so picturesque in beauty she could not refrain from a romantic admiration.

But the truth began to stare her in the face, that the prospect of getting away from her grandfather's house was still as indefinite as ever. On one occasion, accidentally overhearing Miss Conrad remark to Mr. Stanley that Mrs. Vincent had returned to her home in

Washington City, her heart trembled with unspeakable joy. For the mention of the familiar name had stirred memories that of late had seemed to drift into a silent past.

Winter arrived, bringing with it extremely cold weather. The entire face of the earth was covered with a sheet of ice and snow. Each day was only a repetition of the other, silent, dreary, and monotonous. For the sake of a little diversion, Adrienne often resorted to the veranda, that she might look out upon the white, silent world around her. She was standing in the biting cold one morning, when suddenly she observed a detachment of Federal soldiers passing on the turnpike, the next moment followed by a small body of Confederate troops, evidently courting a running fight. Firing began immediately. Adrienne held her breath as volley after volley was repeated, rushing on, one in pursuit of the other, until the noise of the guns died away in the distance. As she drew a long, deep sigh of relief, the girl gravely acknowledged to herself the state of affairs must soon culminate. After this the frequent fusilades kept Adrienne continually on the alert, until she gradually grew accustomed to the noise of rifle shots.

About this time, Mr. Stanley, beginning to realize the Confederates were being forced into giving ground every day, was convinced they

could not much longer hold out against the stupendous pressure brought to bear upon them. Sad and dejected he walked the veranda in pitiful helplessness, as repeated sighs burst from his lips. Oh! the agonizing thought of having to yield to an overwhelming onslaught. It was an unequal contest, the gravity of which now was beginning to be a source of great anxiety for the future in the hearts of the Southern people.

CHAPTER XXIII

At sound of the early bugle-call in the Union camp one morning, Adrienne rose earlier than usual, that she might take a turn on the veranda before the breakfast hour. While making her toilet, catching glimpses through the windows of the white mantle over the entire woodland, the boughs of the trees simply weighted down with snow and pendant icicles, strangely enough the wintry landscape suggested the opposite picture—love speeding her thoughts over the seas to the odorous, balmy shores of the silent East, to the welcoming arms of her father outstretched to receive her.

Suddenly the click of horse-hoofs on the crisp ice caught her ear, when, quickly drawing up the sash, and looking down on the early intruder with curiosity and interest, to her amazement she discovered a mounted Confederate officer directly beneath her window, who this moment chanced a hasty glance upward. Their eyes met. Over his features flashed a look of delighted surprise, as with uplifted hat he bowed nearly to the pommel of his saddle. With an answering glow and smile irradiating her lovely face, she bowed her head in cordial greeting.

But her whole soul was tossed in the throes of emotion. She fell on her knees beside the window and leaned her head upon her arms, trying to recover her equilibrium. Presently rising to her feet, a feeling of excitement half-painful, half-delightful filled her heart as she prepared to go down-stairs.

All at once his imminent danger occurring to her, she clasped her hands in dismay and cried aloud, "Oh! what fate has brought him to so challenge consequences?" Then remembering his pale, stern face as it had appeared to her in the early gray light of the morning, she was impressed that his mission in that region was no child's play.

Later on, upon entering the dining-room, she was considerably taken aback at finding Miss Conrad already comfortably ensconced in a chair directly in front of a brightly burning fire. Standing near, leaning against the mantel and talking earnestly in low tones, was Colonel Strafford. Immediately there was a rush of pride into Adrienne's heart, while an unwonted color flushed her cheeks. But forcing herself forward, she met him with great charm and simplicity of manner, while, as he took her hand in his, addressing her in his usual high-bred tones, she detected a note of restrained feeling in his voice.

"We seem fated to meet most unexpectedly, Miss de Courcelles. I little thought this morning, as I rode along in the cold, cheerless gray of the early dawn, such happiness was in store for me."

"I am delighted to see you, Colonel Strafford. It is always pleasant to meet old friends." Her tone was conventional, but low and sweet. Firmly withdrawing her hand from his grasp, she hastened forward to assist Hannah in placing breakfast on the table, leaving him staring after her with a glow in his eyes. But as he resumed his former position at the mantel, and conversation with Miss Conrad, he could not resist the thought of the subtle change in Adrienne's face that flashed through his mind, failing utterly to unravel the tangle.

In the mean time, Adrienne's quiet exterior in no way betrayed the deep concern she felt for Colonel Strafford's safety. At the sound of every noise on the ice outside, her heart sank within her. "Oh! what could have induced him to risk himself in the very teeth of the enemy?" was her constant, unanswerable thought. The breakfast was ready, and as Miss Conrad moved forward to do the honors of the table, Adrienne walked quietly from the room, closing the door behind her. Bending her steps to the veranda, she stationed herself to watch, and give warning at the approach of

danger; for she was greatly troubled with a vague, uneasy pain at her heart.

Much to her surprise, a company of Confederate soldiers were dismounted in one corner of the lawn, engaged in feeding their horses, as they talked and exchanged jests among themselves. The trees being stripped of their leaves, it was easy to see a long distance on the turnpike in either direction. But suddenly descrying some distance off a body of Union troops coming rapidly toward the house, the great terror of her heart was realized. Rising trembling from her seat, Adrienne fled down the hall to the door of the dining-room, throwing it wide as she stood breathless and affrighted, gazing at the couple now so complacently discussing their breakfast.

"Save, save yourself, Colonel Strafford!" she gasped, her white, set face warning him there was not a moment to lose. But in passing her, he bent low and said,

"Do not needlessly expose yourself to danger, I implore you. Good-by, and God bless you!"

She could not have spoken for her life. But after a moment of suspense and waiting, that seemed to Adrienne an eternity of torture, he came dashing by followed by the howling Confederates. His magnificent presence, as he boldly faced danger and death, added to the attraction of being a superb rider, was indelibly

impressed upon Adrienne's excited brain. Mute with terror she stood, drawn by the fascination of the horror of witnessing a deadly conflict between determined antagonists. Utterly regardless of her own personal safety, she looked at the rapid action of battle. Presently catching sight, through the tumult and smoke, of Colonel Strafford, whose horse was swaying under the saddle, grappling with a Union officer, who now reeled to and fro and the next moment fell to the ground, the girl quaked with excitement, and was scarcely able to repress the cry on her lips. Drawing a long breath, and closing her eyes, she hoped to shut out the horrible picture. But at this juncture, above all other sounds, there arose the thunder of galloping cavalry, and a stream of reinforcements rushed up on the blaze of the contest. The scene was memorable and not apt to be forgotten. The sudden silence that followed caused Adrienne to drop into the nearest chair, faint and white, helplessly clinging to the arms with trembling hands. Overcome with curiosity and anxiety, which seemed to drive terror from her brain, she presently recovered sufficiently to rise to her feet again, and look out on the late battle-ground.

The smoke had cleared away. Colonel Strafford, whose horse lay dead several paces away, was now leaning over the fallen officer, with sadness in his eyes, muttering to himself, "How

in all that is wonderful, came *you* here? Ah! poor fellow, by what chance is it that you have met your fate at *my* hand?" As he still leaned over, looking into the face of the unconscious soldier, the Union guard stepped up and took him in charge. Adrienne realized with a smothered groan of anguish that Colonel Strafford was indeed a prisoner.

Mr. Stanley, this moment walking out on the veranda with stately step, his face like ashes, began a rapid promenade to and fro, his features showing an inward excitement and agitation he was scarcely able to restrain. But at the sudden call of the guard to "halt!" as he presented his gun, he drew his breath hard and straightened himself, then turning his keen, incisive eyes on the guard, demanded,

"Tell me why this iniquitous attack is made upon an unarmed man?"

"Here, old man," called the guard to Caleb, who stood protectingly near his master, "bring this gentleman's hat. Your question, sir, will perhaps receive a satisfactory answer in Washington City."

But at this declaration Adrienne suddenly appeared on the veranda, with tears streaming from her eyes. Bewildered and agitated, she fell on her knees at her grandfather's feet, breathing out in choked accents,

"Grandfather, oh, grandfather!"

The sympathetic chord in the heart of the guard remained utterly callous to the girl's excessive pallor and overwhelming distress.

"I am sorry to disturb you, Miss," he said tersely, "but as I must remove my prisoner, I have no time for argument, nor to indulge in sentiment."

"Control yourself, my dear," said her grandfather, placing his hand tenderly upon the bowed head of the weeping girl. "Remember, we are all in the hands of a merciful Providence."

Adrienne buried her face in her hands that she might not see her grandfather taken away. Colonel Strafford ventured a last sad look at the kneeling girl as he turned to follow.

She stood up on her feet presently, gazing down the road by which the prisoners had gone, perhaps never to return, and everything to the girl became blurred and indistinct with tears—silent, despairing tears.

Fortunately, the surgeon now appeared on the battle-ground, drawing Adrienne's thoughts in another direction as she watched him in his rounds among the wounded, of whom there were several, Federal and Confederate.

White and still the officer lay with his face outlined against the snowy background. The surgeon stopped as he regarded him critically, then stooping proceeded to examine him thor-

oughly. Adrienne looked on from her point of view with sympathy and interest, then suddenly descending the steps crossed over to where he was gravely engaged with his patient. But at sight of the ghastly face of the prostrate soldier she exclaimed aloud, in astonishment, "Lieutenant Havelock!"

Her voice seeming to call him to himself, all at once his eyes opened, suffused with a smile which extended even to his pallid lips, but the next moment he lapsed into his former state of unconsciousness.

"An acquaintance of yours, Miss?" the surgeon asked, glancing up into her face.

"Yes," briefly; "and as we have a spare room on the first floor, I would suggest that you can move him without delay."

"You are thoughtful and kind, Miss. Allow me to thank you for *his* sake. He is badly wounded, and is now exhausted from loss of blood, but I do not think his wounds are necessarily fatal."

Lieutenant Havelock was removed on a stretcher, and Adrienne returned slowly to the house. But not until she had reached the great empty hall did the realization of all that had happened come over her. She seemed scarcely able to rally her faculties. Happily, the thought of Miss Conrad, whom she had not seen since the breakfast hour, came to her relief, and ac-

cordingly she began a systematic search, opening the doors as she came to them. To her surprise, in the darkened library, she found the young lady stretched out on a lounge in the throes of a nervous chill. While promptly administering to her sufferings, Adrienne's thoughts were busy with the conjecture of how much of the morning's happenings the young lady could be aware, but did not bring herself to mention the subject.

Meanwhile, a protest against all this effort to help her seemed to be struggling through the young lady's confused brain, as, turning directly to Adrienne, she said,

"I would not have you interest yourself so much about me, nor must you look so concerned. I feel ashamed of myself for having given way to physical weakness."

Adrienne rose at once to her feet, and stood looking gravely down upon her.

"If you prefer to be alone I will leave you," was all she said, and she deliberately crossed the room and closed the door behind her.

But the days now seemed to creep by, while the two cousins were enduring tortures of unrest and anxiety on their grandfather's account. However, as it was an engrossing interest in common between them, naturally they were drawn together into a closer bond of sympathy, establishing more amicable relations.

Alas! troubles began to thicken. But during the distress and suffering of the hour, Caleb and Hannah proved a tower of strength in their willingness to protect "ole marster's granddaughters." The widespread report that Mr. Stanley had shared the hapless fate of many of his friends and neighbors did not seem to mitigate in the least the pain and anxiety his granddaughters were undergoing as they stared the fact in the face that he was now confronting a question of life and death; while a sense of their own helplessness and dependence assailed them at every point.

Careful attention from trained nurses, in the mean time, had accomplished the slow but sure recovery of Lieutenant Havelock, and he was pronounced sufficiently convalescent to exchange his invalid quarters for more cheerful, health-giving surroundings.

The young ladies, not in the humor to court solitude, every morning were in the habit of collecting the papers, and seating themselves in the hall to begin a fresh search for some reliable news of their grandfather. They were busily engaged in another diligent search one morning, when a shadow fell across the hall door, and Lieutenant Havelock, a thin, ghost-like representation of his former self, appeared before them. Adrienne rose from her chair at once, and went forward to meet him with a

bright and charming manner, then presented Miss Conrad, before whom he bowed in courteous acknowledgment of the introduction. Sinking into a chair Adrienne had thoughtfully pushed toward him, he said, his voice trembling from weakness as he spoke,

"You cannot know, Miss de Courcelles, how longingly I have been looking forward to the opportunity of expressing my sincere regret that it should have been through *me* you have had call to suffer. I had no idea that it was *your* grandfather's ground upon which I was sent to make an attack. I received another inexpressible shock upon that ill-fated morning, in that the blow that came near laying me low was aimed by a life-long friend."

"Colonel Strafford?" exclaimed the cousins in concert.

After reflecting a moment the Lieutenant replied, in grave tones,

"I am speaking of Colonel Strafford. We have been friends and comrades together since boyhood. But I am at a loss to understand what he is doing in the Confederate ranks. It is true, he is an inveterate traveler, and has been so long absent from home that I had quite lost the run of his bearings, never dreaming of finding him on *this* side of the world as my assailant in a hand-to-hand combat. But as the smoke was so thick, and excitement so great,

I do not know whether or not I was recognized in turn. I fancy," now looking ruefully down upon his disabled arm supported in a sling, "that in *this* I have received my final parole."

This communication from Lieutenant Havelock bringing vividly before the minds of his fair listeners most painful recollections of the recent tragic occurrences, forced them into a silence eloquent of the distress they were bravely endeavoring to suppress.

The period of Lieutenant Havelock's convalescence was fraught with moments half-happy, half-miserable. Happy, because of breathing the same atmosphere with Adrienne; miserable, because of the illusive hope of a return of his devotion. Alas! The truth soon impressed itself upon his unwilling perception, that he had given his heart into the hands of a very unresponsive subject, and accordingly he became disturbed and agitated. He set to work with the firm resolution of getting away before he should have had time to betray his weakness. But of the nature of his regard toward herself, Adrienne was never made aware.

Though he still wore his arm in a sling Lieutenant Havelock had entered upon a new lease of life. The time for his departure had arrived, and as he was bidding the cousins a reluctant farewell, Miss Conrad suddenly produced a sealed letter, addressed to Mrs. Vincent, which

she asked of him the kindness to post when he had reached Washington. Cordially assuring her that he would take great delight in delivering it in person, the Lieutenant mounted his horse and rode disconsolately away.

Miss Conrad turned to Adrienne and explained that her letter to Mrs. Vincent was an appeal to her for protection in their now dangerously exposed condition.

That Lieutenant Havelock had been faithful to the trust placed in him was evidenced by the arrival of a carriage from Washington, accompanied by a message from Mrs. Vincent, wonderfully generous and kind of which were these few lines:

"Come to me at once, it is the only thing you can do. To whom else would you appeal for comfort in your trouble? I was on the eve of sending for you when Lieutenant Havelock appeared with your letter."

So, only too glad to start at once in quest of safety, hoping also to glean some definite news of their grandfather, they called in Caleb and Hannah and told them. Everything was placed in their capable charge, and thus buoyed with hope, they were soon on the road to Washington.

CHAPTER XXIV

Weary and heart-sick, the cousins reached the end of their journey, and were warmed by Mrs. Vincent's affectionate sympathy, such as a noble, generous-minded woman only can give.

Miss Conrad, nervous and over-strained, seemed to give way utterly.

"Ah! Mrs. Vincent," she said, trying to restrain her trembling tones, "we do indeed appreciate your goodness. Oh! the dreary, miserable time we have gone through since grandfather was taken away from us, is beyond the power of words to paint. You can imagine how it has been—worrying over contingencies that might arise to shut him off completely from us."

"It is needless to say, dear Belle, how inexpressibly touched I feel on account of your troubles, but, with no intention of magnifying matters, I really believe there is not the slightest cause for despair." And succeeding at last, in her own sweet way, in quieting, after a manner, the young lady's distress, Mrs. Vincent presently turned to Adrienne, and said,

"I am very certain, Adrienne, should you feel disposed to chronicle them, your varied ex-

periences since we parted in New Orleans would fill a good-sized volume."

"But, a story too sad in its meanderings with which to burden the public and warrant a good sale," smiled the girl.

They had paused a moment before the drawing-room door. Mrs. Vincent, motioning Adrienne to enter, led the way up-stairs, anxious to get Miss Conrad quietly and comfortably in bed.

As Adrienne opened the door and stepped into the room, suddenly a gentleman of imposing presence emerged from the shadow of the lace curtains at one of the front windows. Coming quickly toward her, his eyes flashed instantaneous joy as he caught the half-bewildered girl into his arms, drawing her closely to his heart, while, in a moment, she had realized indeed that she was in the arms of her father. A half expressed sigh of peace, contentment, and comfort passed her lips. They were too deeply moved for words. At last Mr. de Courcelles broke the silence, and as he spoke his voice was tremulous with deep emotion.

"My child, we have been victims of most unfortunate circumstances; but, at last, our long, tedious separation is at an end."

"But, father," she said, with a ring of joy in her low tones, "I seem to be unable to realize the height, depth, and broadness of my great

new happiness. I have dreamed of you, pouring out all the love of my heart upon the creature of my imagination, and now that I have the reality, I simply crave to cling to you, never again to be taken away."

Deep affection shone in his eyes as he regarded her face.

"In appearance, Adrienne, you are beyond my fondest anticipation. But, accustomed as I have been to regard you as my little girl, I had not thought to find such a full-fledged young lady."

She glanced laughingly up into his face.

"Nor did *I* expect to see my father so young looking."

"You are not disappointed, Adrienne," he smiled caressingly, as he placed his hand upon her soft dusky hair, "that I am not a decrepit?"

"I am altogether satisfied with you just as you are," she answered, with a quick, bright, answering smile. "I would not have one cubit added or taken away from your stature, nor change the rich olive tint of your complexion, nor would I have added or taken away one gray hair of the very slight sprinkle already among your jetty locks, which gives you so distinguished an appearance, for, to me, you are simply perfect."

"So, my child," putting his hand under her chin and turning her face for earnest scrutiny,

"it happens that, being mutually pleased with each other, we have a most delightful sequel to our troubles." And they laughed happily together. But having been on a prolonged stay from home, now that he had found Adrienne, Mr. de Courcelles proposed sailing in the next steamer on his return voyage. Adrienne's brow suddenly saddened.

"Father," said she, "I shall not willingly leave Washington until I know something definite of grandfather. I greatly fear for his health under the conditions to which he is exposed."

"Make your mind at rest, Adrienne, that I shall do all in my power to find out his whereabouts."

"Oh, thank you, father. You cannot know what a sad hour it was the morning he was taken away under guard from his dearly loved home. I do not seem to forget the misery of that moment, as I watched the rigid pallor on his face."

Every effort was put forth to glean satisfactory information of Mr. Stanley. But notwithstanding the diligent search, after days of fruitless effort Mr. de Courcelles was forced to abandon the quest. Adrienne, utterly helpless in the matter, was sorely disappointed, and trembled for the life of her grandfather. Feeling that she ought not to be a hindrance to her

father in his arrangements, she yielded cheerfully to his wish to sail for the East.

In the mean time, Miss Conrad having succumbed to the nervous shock received on the morning of the skirmish, was now seriously ill. Adrienne was sincerely sympathetic, but, with the exception of the doctor, nurse, and Mrs. Vincent, no one was allowed in her room.

The morning upon which Mr. de Courcelles and Adrienne were to leave Washington City, as they were driving to the depot in a light trap, suddenly their attention was attracted a half block ahead of them toward a droll-looking procession of old men in citizen's dress that moment turning the corner. All were in black, shabby and worn, and many were topped off by the regulation gentleman's silk hat, now so battered and bespattered as to bear scarcely any resemblance to their pristine state of elegance. Mounted on scrubby farm horses, guided by rope bridles, they were filing slowly round the corner of the street, when a cry, clear and sweet, rang out on the crisp morning air, "Grandfather, grandfather!" Adrienne stood with arms extended, her face pale with excitement and grief. But her voice was drowned by the jeers of a tough crowd of boys following the procession, who were crying out with loud ha, ha's, "Hurrah for the silk-hat brigade!"

Mr. de Courcelles, at once comprehending the state of affairs, after a low spoken order to the coachman, gently drew the agitated girl down beside him, and tenderly tried to soothe her evident distress. Presently she dried her eyes, and looked pathetically up into his as she said, in a sad strain,

"It seems strange, father, those grand old men, who have only been guilty of fidelity to their country, should have had to suffer such bitter humiliation."

"Your undying faith in the love of humanity must have received a shock at this proceeding; but, alas! Adrienne, war is a great leveller, and at such times distinctions are overlooked. Perhaps the authorities are in ignorance of what has transpired; at any rate, you must not let this unhappy episode prey upon your spirits. Your grandfather may have been released."

Meanwhile, unobserved by Adrienne, the carriage had followed slowly after the procession, and presently drew up beside a railway station. Mr. de Courcelles, carefully assisting Adrienne out, led the way into the waiting-room, where, to her surprise, as she gave a hurried glance round, her eyes fell on her grandfather, who sat a little apart from his compatriots, in a dejected attitude, apparently taking no notice of his surroundings. Adrienne took her father's hand and resolutely drew him with her, mak-

ing no sign of the emotion that swept through her young heart as she bent over and greeted him affectionately.

"Grandfather," she said, raising her voice, for he was rather hard of hearing, "I have brought my father to see you before he leaves."

Raising his head with a tired, worn look on his face, Mr. Stanley's features lighted up with a smile as he held out a trembling hand and said in a weak, quavering voice,

"I am glad to span the chasm of years by a reconciling clasp of your hand, Mr. de Courcelles. I am truly glad to see you, even though you should find me in so humiliating a position at present. But, tell me, are you taking Adrienne away from me?"

A sudden look of determination had sprung into Adrienne's eyes.

"No, grandfather," she answered firmly, "having this moment thought of your condition in the absence of Belle to aid and accompany you, I cannot decide to leave you until she is sufficiently recovered to take her place at home."

Her father was struck dumb by this declaration, and as she glanced into his white face, she was almost staggered in her resolution. Moving near to him, she said, in low, distressed tones,

"You must not feel so disappointed, father. For when you think of it, what else can I do? It would not be right to shirk my plain duty so. When I shall have joined you—only a little time off—my conscience will not be burdened with the sting of self-reproach. Yet, oh! father, you cannot understand how unspeakably I yearn to go with you."

Restraining his annoyance by a huge effort, Mr. de Courcelles replied,

"When I have been longing these many years to have you with me, Adrienne, must I leave you behind after all? You are a brave girl, and as I will not stand in the way of your sacred duty, I shall try and bear our short separation as patiently as possible." He held out his hand to the old gentleman, who grasped it readily with a friendly clasp.

"It is Adrienne's final decision to remain with you, Mr. Stanley, to which I have given my consent, until Miss Conrad is restored to health, and her usual place beside you. I am sorry to hurry away, but having a pressing business engagement waiting me in Paris, I cannot afford to delay my departure. Good-by, Mr. Stanley; I hope Miss Conrad may soon be with you, fully recovered, and that it will not be long before I can welcome Adrienne to her Eastern home."

Taking Adrienne in his arms and kissing her repeatedly, suddenly releasing her, he walked away, never once looking back; while Adrienne, with almost superhuman strength of will, was resisting the great wave of despondency and sorrow sweeping over her soul.

But she was unconscious of the Spartan courage she had shown in renouncing, even for a short while, a happy home with her father in the exquisite land of the East, in exchange for a retired life on a deserted plantation, subject to the whims and garrulity of old age.

Adrienne was standing a little apart from her grandfather, silently observing the comers and goers passing in the waiting-room, when a call from him drew her to his side.

"Come, Adrienne, sit beside me. I want to say, that since I have seen your father with unprejudiced eyes, I have awakened to the fact that he is not only an exceedingly fascinating man, but princely in his bearing. And I have noticed, my child, that you have inherited his low, musical laugh and voice."

CHAPTER XXV

As time moved on, Adrienne's heart was saddened by the increasing feebleness of her grandfather's step. The whiteness of his hair, if possible, became more bleached every day, while his features settled into lines of patient endurance, and his form seemed to grow more attenuated and drooping. It was touching to see the old gentleman stand on the veranda and gaze wistfully over his broad domain, where, instead of green fields, weeds now flourished undisturbed, and complete desolation reigned.

The loneliness was depressing, but the girl endured it all without thought of complaint. At nightfall, instead of the brilliantly illuminated sky from the many fires in the Union camp, as formerly, a death-like stillness prevailed, broken only by the wailing note of the whippoorwill, and occasional hoot of the night owl.

But the woods by light of day attested by their gorgeous array of wild flowers and fresh green leaves the return of spring.

The struggle between the two sections had now become a continuous flame of shot and shell. The Confederate army now staggering

under its stupendous losses, Mr. Stanley could no longer blind himself to the truth that the end was swiftly approaching in overwhelming defeat. Alas! the star of the South must go down behind a murky horizon of vanquished hopes and the ascending smoke of desolated homes.

At the announcement of the surrender at Appomattox, Mr. Stanley bowed his head, closed his lips, and seeking the gloom of his private study, sat down in silence to weep over the grave of his crushed spirit, personal liberty, and political rights. His manifest despair enlisted all the sympathy and love of which Adrienne's tender heart was capable. But she could not persuade herself to intrude upon the sacredness of his self-imposed seclusion. Thus left entirely to herself, she had ample time to reflect upon the calamity that had so ruthlessly befallen the beautiful South. But under the trying ordeal she was not unmindful of the fact that it behooved her to encourage as cheerful a frame of mind as possible. Yet, as day succeeded day, and there was no change in the weary passing hours, a condition was created so depressing, that even upon the hands of so philosophical a young lady as Adrienne de Courcelles, the time began to hang unspeakably heavy. As a relief from the solitary rooms of the great empty house, late one afternoon

Adrienne strolled out on the river bank. She was dressed in white, a cluster of deep red roses at her belt. Discovering a boat rolling at its moorings in the shadow of some bushes, suddenly the temptation came to her to take a row, merely as a diversion from her accustomed meditative moods. Taking up the oar, in a moment she was as comfortably installed as possible on a board seat, minus a dainty silk cushion, or even rug to put about her, and pushing off from shore, she began to move gently along, drifting between the banks down the quiet flowing water. This experience in the glory of the evening on the silent river she would remember to her dying day. The beauty of the forest and sweetness of everything was a tonic to her downcast spirits. So rapt was she, so nearly in a dream, she was but vaguely conscious of the approach of a horseman now clearly outlined against the brilliant sky, when, upon a nearer view, his figure seemed strangely familiar. A curious sensation rushed into her heart as, having caught sight of the graceful white figure in the boat, thrown into clear relief against the green on the opposite bank, he paused and dismounted. He lifted his hat, showing his noble head, and handsome face, saying, as he bowed low,

"Will not Miss de Courcelles, for old acquaintance's sake, remove this watery barrier, that one may have the pleasure of shaking her hand after a long absence?"

She laughed, making droll little gestures toward the oars in her unskilled maneuvers to land. Nevertheless, in a few moments she was holding out the oar, which he caught in time to save her from a sudden tumble in. Drawing the boat safely ashore, he took her ungloved hand in his, assisting her out, as he said, with a little tremor in his voice, while her cheek flushed, and her heart seemed to stop beating as he rested his splendid eyes upon hers,

"Fortune has indeed favored me beyond my most sanguine expectation."

"Ah, Colonel Strafford, though late, I must congratulate you upon your marvelous escape that memorable morning," she quickly said, her heart thrilling even at memory of the time.

His eyes darkened with a shadow of sorrow that changed the smile into a look of unusual gravity on his face.

"It seems wonderful," he said, "one's powers of endurance. But I have not regretted, through it all, my share of suffering through the ordeal. Could the South have dominated the situation, I should have felt doubly repaid. But now it will undergo an entire change, socially and industrially, and as yet there is not

one ray of hope to cheer the hearts of the people. How is your grandfather surviving the blow?"

"Alas! he is utterly crushed," shaking her head and sighing. "I am afraid his troubles are just beginning. The plantation is deserted, with the exception of Caleb and Hannah, who alone have been able to resist the alluring sweets of freedom, and make a bold front of clinging to the usual routine. While I have been but partially successful in ameliorating grandfather's distress and loneliness, I am conscious of not taking the place of Miss Conrad, to whom he is devotedly attached, but who is not yet sufficiently recovered to risk a return to the landmarks so keenly associated with the cause of her illness."

During the conversation they had seated themselves on a fallen tree, where the river rippled by. The beautiful girl, whose eyes were so indescribably fascinating, harmonized perfectly with the romantic spot.

"I have come back to tell you of my love, and ask you to be my wife," he said suddenly. "I think we have realized from the first that we belong to each other. Are you willing to give yourself to me?" His voice was deep and tender, sending a current of blissful happiness into every fibre of her soul as she raised her eyes to his, luminous from the reflection of their great love for him, and gave her hand into his keep-

ing. He was conscious of beauty's enchanting power as he bent his head close to hers, and in low, winning tones asked,

"Are you happy, my darling, in trusting your entire future to me?"

"Perfectly," she answered frankly. He stooped, and kissed the sweet, trembling lips.

The red glow from the setting sun had gradually faded away into semi-darkness, when Adrienne suddenly sprang to her feet, exclaiming hurriedly,

"See, Colonel Strafford, how late it is growing. Grandfather will be anxious. You will come by and see him?"

"I regret, little one, that I cannot comply with your invitation so sweetly given. But, in answer to an urgent call, I am now on my way to England, and must not lose any time. In the mean time, my darling, we shall have our happiness to cheer us during a brief separation, which must be the only drop of bitterness that shall fall into our cup of bliss."

The quick, pained look in the lovely eyes told him of the regret she felt at his going. But, though her lips quivered, she resolved to be brave, and as they reached the little side gate leading into the grounds, Colonel Strafford felt forced to tear himself from the presence of the dainty, lovely girl at his side, who, from excess of emotion, could not frame a sentence on her

lips in farewell, but stood a moment where he had left her in the sweet scented twilight, straining her eyes, as she unconsciously stretched out her hands toward him, to catch the last glimpse of his figure as his horse carried him swiftly into the dusky shadows of the trees.

CHAPTER XXVI

Adrienne paused upon one of the tangled paths in her grandfather's neglected flower-garden. On her arm hung a basket of freshly cut roses, on whose petals the morning dew-drops now sparkled in prismatic colors. While seeming to gaze abstractedly at the many brilliant butterflies flitting from bush to bush sipping their morning libations of honey-dew, as they settled down now and then waving yellow and variegated wings, in reality she was pondering over the happy anticipation of soon seeing Colonel Strafford, who would be in the United States at an early date. Besides, there was another impetus to pleasant meditation from a recent communication of Kittie's, announcing the fact that she might be expected at any hour.

Her basket now filled with exquisitely colored and fragrant roses, Adrienne turned away from the garden, moving with easy graceful step toward the veranda, where she seated herself, proceeding, with a glad song in her heart, to select and arrange them for the different vases, and had nearly completed the delightful task, when her glance was attracted to the broad

graveled drive by the sudden noise of wheels, and the next moment a young lady stepped out of a closed carriage, shrouded in deep mourning, whose familiar figure and little trick of manner betrayed to Adrienne her dearly loved friend Kittie McVea.

"Oh, Adrienne," cried Kittie, rushing up to her in the old impulsive way remembered so well by Adrienne, "your dear letter came to me as a welcome boon, for I had nearly despaired at the unspeakable monotony of my life."

"We have had a sad end to all our buoyant hopes," said Adrienne, gravely; "but, as it is irremediable, it behooves us to acquiesce quietly, leaving everything in the hands of One who has said we must trust in Him alone."

"Ah, do I not remember well," laughed Kittie, the old merry sparkle in her sweet blue eyes, "that a disposition always to look on the bright side of things is one of the most striking characteristics of Miss de Courcelles's equable nature? But, I must say, for *my* part, that having made up my mind to eschew the marriage state—the idea of settling down into a commonplace character, to live only for a husband and household duties not at all to my fancy,—I have resolved to leave this 'vale of tears' and travel to some distant mission point, perhaps in far away India, and there devote my time to the benighted heathens, and try and teach them the

doctrine of humanity, at least, at the same time fill up my life usefully if not ornamentally."

"Do you know, Kittie," said Adrienne, seeming to have had a sudden inspiration, "I have just thought of a most delightful as well as feasible plan, that will give you ample field to indulge your philanthropic schemes, and will give to me the happiness of your companionship. I propose that you will go home with me, as some blessed star will soon be guiding me to the heathen land of the East, in which, you know, my tent is already pitched."

"Do you really mean it, Adrienne? You know so well how delighted I should be to go with you." And Kittie's face dimpled all over with sunny pleasure at the mere thought of it.

They were seated at one of the handsome windows in Adrienne's room, overlooking a summer landscape radiant in its beauty.

"I am certain, Kittie," Adrienne suddenly said, "you remember the gallant officer to whom I introduced you upon the morning of your visit to Mrs. Willesly's. I had planned a sweet little romance connecting your destiny with that of Lieutenant Belden's. But, alas, subsequent sudden and unexpected happenings exploded all my air castles like soap bubbles. And do you know, Kittie, from the tragic morning upon which we separated, to the present time, I have not heard a syllable from him."

"Then," said Kittie, quickly, with a gleam of fun in her eyes, "you are not aware that upon that same day of which you speak, upon the retreat from the river, Lieutenant Belden was so severely wounded that he was sent to my father's house for timely attention. I am sorry to have to say, Adrienne, that your cunningly devised plans in regard to myself were wide of the mark, which I have occasion to know from whisperings through his parched lips during his feverish ravings of a certain 'oriental lily,' whose 'dusky, dreamy eyes' were luring him on to a certain paradisiacal state of delight. I confess that, taking umbrage at even his unconscious babblings, I mercilessly turned him over, with his rhapsodies, to the more considerate, tender care of my stepmother." And Kittie gave way to a merry laugh.

Cheerful company revived Adrienne's flagging spirits, that had been suffering from too much solitude. The time glided by with surprising rapidity. Even after supper, not yet having exhausted their budget of innocent gossip, they repaired to the veranda, and after the manner of girls began to promenade as they continued the same lively chatter. There was no moon, but the brightly shining stars in the cloudless heavens seemed to have wrapped the earth in the shadow of twilight, and the air was pervaded with a sweetness like midsummer.

But suddenly the young ladies were startled to a standstill by an unearthly shriek of an owl close by.

"Ah!" cried Kittie, drawing a long breath, "that is a gruesome omen. Old Mammy Jude at home, who is an oracle in such like, would solemnly proclaim some one is to die in this house."

"For shame, Kittie!" Adrienne retorted, with laughing scorn, "that a girl of *your* sense should conjure up a boggy out of an every-day owl. It is too absurd, and past believing."

"When it comes to *that*," spoke up Kittie, quickly, "will you show me a Southerner who, from early association with negroes, is not just a little bit superstitious? While I feel free to confess, that I find their superstition quite a picturesque feature of the negro race."

"Kittie," smiled Adrienne, ironically, "your argument is impressive and logical."

Notwithstanding Kittie's scarecrow, the two girls, tired and sleepy from their extra exertion during the day, undisturbed by night-winged spectre, goblin, or ghost, weird and unearthly and a part of night's mystery, peacefully slumbered on.

CHAPTER XXVII

"Miss Adr'en, Miss Adr'en!" was the call that roused Adrienne out of a deep sleep the next morning. "Is you awake?"

"Yes, Hannah; what is it?"

"Ole marster 'pears mighty po'ly dis mornin', an' Caleb sez mus' he go fur de doctor?"

"Yes, Hannah, tell him not to lose a moment, but go *at once*." And springing out of bed, Adrienne dressed rapidly, then flew down to the library and dashed off a message to Mrs. Vincent, to be sent by Caleb to the telegraph office. Then going to her grandfather's rooms, and finding him in a stupor, she was inexpressibly shocked. But despite the solicitous efforts, and prompt application of remedies made to rouse him, Mr. Stanley grew steadily worse, and as the night was closing in, his soul passed out of its earthly tenement into the mysterious state of the Eternal.

But that her grandfather had not rallied sufficiently to recognize her, nor to leave any message behind, seemed to Adrienne inexpressibly sad. She was thinking of the mystery of death hidden from mortal eye, of the great forces beyond this scene of things, and of her

grandfather's fleeing spirit, when the doctor came up behind her and addressed her,

"Miss de Courcelles, with great care, your grandfather perhaps could have lasted much longer, even with organic heart trouble, of which he died. But the strain of mind and excessive worry over the issue of the war, altogether, has produced the sad result. His many friends will miss him and mourn his death. Mr. Stanley had a remarkable personality, and was looked up to and respected by all who knew him."

The time, for Adrienne, had she not been taken up with these unanswerable, intangible questions, with which she never before had been in contact, would have been inexpressibly dreary.

Softly the neighbors came and went, not a voice was heard to disturb the solemn hush of death.

Adrienne's lovely face was grave and sorrowful, but not unresigned. She was the only relative present at the funeral. Kittie was beside her friend, all sympathy and affection, but felt utterly unable to aid or cheer at such a time.

On their return to the great empty house, now wrapped in unspeakable gloom, they sat down silently together, while Adrienne now

stared the fact in the face that her tender ministrations to her grandfather were forever over.

Suddenly the sound of wheels on the graveled drive broke in upon the brooding silence hovering over the two occupants of the hall. Secretly relieved, Kittie rose and moved to the window, at once turning to Adrienne and saying,

"A lady is coming up the walk."

The next moment Mrs. Vincent was ushered in. She walked directly up to Adrienne, and after kissing the girl with loving sympathy, she said,

"I wish I could comfort you, dear child, in this sudden trouble, and would have been with you at the beginning of your sad experience had it been possible for me to leave Belle, who was again prostrated by the news of her grandfather's death, which struck her like a blow, just as she was beginning to slowly improve."

"I hope the shock will not prove serious. Meanwhile, it will take time to overcome her sorrow. Come, Kittie," said Adrienne, smiling sweetly. "Mrs. Vincent, this is Miss McVea, my dear friend, who, fortunately, has been with me, so sweet and sympathetic."

"I am prepared to welcome cordially all your friends, Adrienne," said Mrs. Vincent, as she took Kittie's hand and flashed upon her a warm, gracious smile of greeting.

"Mrs. Vincent," said Adrienne, "you are *so* kind to come to us in our distress. I am sure I feel for you the tenderest love and gratitude."

"It is nothing. I am glad to have been able to come, even at this late hour. But, Adrienne, I have a proposal to make. It is my wish, since it will not be good for you two young ladies to remain alone in this great house, as you not only would be moped to death, but would grow morbid and sensitive, that you return with me to Washington. Get ready, for we must start at once."

Adrienne's face lighted up at this proof of disinterested friendship, giving most earnest, appreciative thanks. Though for months past Adrienne's life had been one of sacrifice, she clung fondly to the memory of her grandfather, whose sad end had filled her with inexplicable sorrow and pity. She strove, however, to conceal her distress from Kittie's ever-watchful eyes, but the unconscious sadness plainly written upon her sweet face, Kittie had not failed to observe.

One morning, when they had been in Washington for a short while, Adrienne said suddenly to Kittie,

"What are we waiting for, Kittie? No longer any impediment in our way, I propose to sail for home."

This question, for which Kittie had been anxiously waiting, was a genuine relief, as she was anxious to get away for a while from her native land, which held such bitter memories in the death of her father, and a disintegrated home. A message, accordingly, was despatched to Mr. de Courcelles to expect them at an early day. So they set to work with a will to make preparations for their journey.

"Do you know, Adrienne," said Kittie, "the thought is running through my mind of what a life of self-renunciation you have been living lately, chained to the fancies of an aged grandfather, while, even now, you are but hurrying forward to meet the demands of an invalid father, and minister again to declining age."

The first approach to mirth, since her bereavement, flashed over Adrienne's features, as she darted a look into Kittie's unconscious face, but made no reply.

Every plausible argument to persuade them from their purpose Mrs. Vincent sought to use.

"Dear Mrs. Vincent, I am so grateful for all your kindness, but I feel sure my father would not approve of my delaying any longer my return home," said Adrienne, sweetly earnest. In the mean time, Mr. Strafford's letters had been frequent, each one repeating the declaration of his love and devotion. He dreamed of nothing else beyond the fact that she had con-

fessed her love, and that she now belonged to him. Once he dwelt upon the hour in which he had last seen her sitting in the midst of beauty stretching to right and left, while the golden light of the sun crested the hills around, and the water made music as it rippled by. Adrienne's next letter to him was an explanation of the cause of her sudden departure from America, expressing her deep regret at not being able to await his return to Washington. But the announcement that he was expected to return in company with Lieutenant Havelock almost caused her to waver in her resolution.

Miss Conrad was yet critically ill, but hope was brighter for her final recovery.

On the register of the next out-going liner the names Adrienne de Courcelles and Kittie Lester McVea were plainly written.

CHAPTER XXVIII

After a delightful voyage, Kittie was awakened early in the morning by the excessive sense of the intense silence and hush of everything. There was felt no more rolling of the ship, nor was there any dark smoke belching from her funnels, for the throbs of the great engine were still.

"Surely," thought Kittie, now sitting up in bed and rubbing her eyes, "we are at anchor." And unable to withstand the impulse of curiosity that assailed her, springing nimbly to her feet, she hurried through her toilet, though she made one of unusual care, then glided noiselessly from the stateroom, leaving Adrienne to the undisturbed enjoyment of a morning nap. Making her way to the deck, suddenly the delights of an Eastern harbor, in all its resplendent beauty, spread its enchantment before her eyes. She looked across the glittering blue of the sea, to the waving palms in the distance, all of which filled her soul with a rapt sense of delight.

But as her eyes now fell on the boats coming out to the steamer, and seeing no one whom she could decide was Mr. de Courcelles, a little

disappointed, she turned and went back to the salon, encountering, as she entered, a tall, elegant-looking stranger, a modern, self-possessed man of the world.

"I beg your pardon," she said eagerly, "but if you have just arrived perhaps you can tell me whether or not an old gentleman is among the crowd in the boats? My friend is expecting her father to meet us."

Lifting his hat, as his eyes lighted up with smiling interest, the stranger bowed and said,

"Pardon me, but have I not the pleasure of addressing Miss McVea? While I am under the necessity of having to own that I am the venerable gentleman of whom Miss McVea is in quest."

She flashed a startled, wondering look at him, as she stammered forth,

"Impossible! Surely, you are not Mr. de Courcelles?" A look of keen amusement was in his eyes as she hurried on. "Adrienne's father, I remember, is a confirmed invalid, so old and feeble that he is forced to reside in the salubrious climate of Egypt, where alone he can move and have his being." But he could not resist the merry gleam that shot from her eyes as she now glanced up into his.

"As a matter of fact," he answered, and his voice was low and sweet, "Miss McVea expected to see an octogenarian—quite the imper-

sonation of palsied, toothless senility. Is it not so?" and he laughed. Kittie was silent, as though reflecting upon an answer to so obviously an embarrassing question.

"I will admit," she said, with some hesitancy, "that I received the impression from Adrienne at school." But happily, Adrienne's appearance on the scene spared Kittie the embarrassment of struggling through another sentence, soon forgetting her dilemma in watching the two, now absorbed in themselves, as she tried to realize the relationship between them.

When the brilliant capital of Egypt, in all its oriental splendor, swept into view, Kittie's vision was truly dazzled.

"What a paradise!" she exclaimed, in the ecstasy of delight. "Surely one could look upon this glowing picture with an unending exclamation of rapture. But, see, Adrienne, what a contrast to its ancient surroundings is that very modern equipage, with its liveried coachman,—seemingly so out of place,—now coming down to the landing."

"It is really true, father," laughed Adrienne, "that this warm-hearted Kittie would vastly prefer trudging along in sandals, in sockless feet, over the burning sands, to carry out her idea of the eternal fitness of things."

Mr. de Courcelles laughed softly, caressing the careless, charming Kittie with his dark eyes

as he assisted her into this same liveried turnout! Whereupon, as the young lady took her seat, she caught her breath, lifting her eyes in voiceless apology, as she mentally registered a vow that she would be careful in future to hold her precocious tongue after this imprudent piece of volubility on her part.

They were soon bowling over a lovely boulevard, through magnificent tropical trees, toward Mr. de Courcelles's residence, which they found sitting in a grove of palm, lemon and orange trees—in the midst of grounds filled with beauty and sweet odors intensely delighting the eye. Kittie, whose senses were charmed, had the gift of appreciating color, which belongs alone to artistic natures. With a healthy brain and heart her love of beauty had developed her perceptions over the ordinary. She was enchanted with all she saw.

In darkened apartments the young ladies slept off their fatigue, and when the late afternoon came on, and they were drawn to the inviting shade and cool delight of the veranda, Adrienne appeared dressed in sheer white, relieved by a cluster of delicate pink flowers fastened at her belt, looking incomparably lovely. While Kittie added beauty and brightness to the picture with her sparkling dark blue eyes and halo of glittering hair round her

charming face. Mr. de Courcelles, as he sat near smoking a cigar, was an appreciative observer.

"Do you know, father," presently said Adrienne, smiling down on him, "I feel that I shall soon grow to love the glow of this exquisite land, and am beginning already to feel quite at home."

"That I should have consented to be separated from you, Adrienne, has been a great mistake. I realize it all now."

"Yes, but we must learn by sad experience. There can be no wise reason, however, that we should worry over past mistakes."

The mixture of ceremonious courtesy with gentle affection that marked Mr. de Courcelles's manner toward his daughter secretly contributed to Kittie's amusement. While, day by day, the society of these charming young ladies seemed to Mr. de Courcelles all that was needed to make life perfect. The bewitching harmony and refinement of their sweet voices and cultured manners touched his heart with a longing after happiness, such happiness as one knows alone in domestic life. So, when it pleased them to tax his gallantry, he was found always ready and willing to do their behest—even to go with them wheresoever their fancy drifted, unconsciously developing, by the process, into quite a society man.

There was something strangely fascinating to Kittie in Mr. de Courcelles's personality. His distinguished bearing, the low music of his voice, were irresistible. She had never met any one like him. She was conscious of a thrill of delight running through her soul if he should speak. Besides, the atmosphere of luxury by which she was surrounded acted with magic effect.

Once she placed her hand upon Adrienne's shoulder, laughing merrily, as she peeped with mischief-loving eyes into her face, and said,

"What is it, Adrienne, your funny little Egyptian maid calls Mr. de Courcelles—'the rich howadji'? And I am sure it fits him down to the ground. Do you know, Adrienne, I am now going to make a ridiculous confession. Having caught the impression from you at school that your father was old, and a confirmed invalid, you can imagine my profound surprise when he presented himself before us on the steamer upon our arrival." And Kittie gave way to another merry peal of laughter.

"Your mistake was wholly your own, Kittie. I am sure I had no intention of misleading you," said Adrienne, laughing also.

But as the weeks went by and there had been no communication from Colonel Strafford, the indescribable pain at Adrienne's heart stopped the smiles on her lips, though she betrayed in

no other way the bitterness she was suffering. Finally making up her mind that she would not cling to the love *he* thought so lightly of, as day succeeded day, she firmly endeavored to put it out of her heart altogether. And never once alluded to any part of her life spent in the United States.

In the mean time, completely taken up with her own thoughts and her increasing admiration for the Orient, Kittie seemed not to notice the look of increasing gravity in her friend's lovely eyes, but was heard to say to Adrienne in her usual blithesome, careless manner,

"If this is the land of the heathen, Adrienne, I confess I am awfully in love with heathendom. But my prophetic soul tells me—all things having an end—that a change is coming in my life, *nolens volens*."

As Kittie had repeatedly remarked that the pleasure craved above all others by her was a sail up the Nile, a picnic excursion on a native boat was agreed upon. Kittie's heart was on her lips, and her eyes emitted flashes of rapturous delight, as they drove down to the boat, which, in honor of Kittie, was flying the United States flag.

Soon they were seated together on deck under the protection of their sunshades, Mr. de Courcelles in white yachting suit and cap, the young ladies in white yachting dresses and

caps, making a fascinating picture, modern in style though it was. The boat carried them steadily out from the landing, and on, and as their eyes were bent toward the receding domes and spires of the brilliant oriental city, Adrienne turned to her father and said,

"Is it not pleasant to glide into this tranquil atmosphere, where nothing is heard save imaginary whisperings from a dead past?"

"Now, Adrienne," Kittie interposed with a laugh, and the usual gleam of mischief in her eyes, "I protest against prowling among petrified mummies, or raking into the sacred ashes of these extinct ancients, or conjuring up any of their unwilling ghosts. But rather let us extract all the enjoyment possible out of this day. Think of the felicity of sailing to a luxurious October breeze on the historic Nile. The very thought, even, suggests a feeling of unalloyed bliss."

At the dinner hour a delicious repast was served on deck under the flapping awnings, which was gaily discussed by the laughing, chatting trio, after which, as Mr. de Courcelles lounged in a steamer chair, revelling dreamily in the luxury of an after-dinner cigar, he remarked to the young ladies,

"As Philae is the destiny of every modern tourist, suppose we continue our voyage as far.

Though it is true little remains of its ancient glory, and that little is crumbling fast."

For an instant Kittie's heart stood still. But Adrienne's reply dashed all her hopes to the ground.

"As we are not tourists, or Egyptologists, we can defer our trip until we are more in the mood for exploring."

Kittie groaned in spirit, silently looking on at the gliding landscape, as she bemoaned the fact that her day's pleasure must so soon be over.

Late in the afternoon, as they came into the landing at Cairo, conspicuous among the new arrivals was a steam yacht, flying the British colors. Kittie, the first to notice it, cried out in irrepressible tones of curiosity,

"Hello! what does this mean? See, what a distinguished-looking man." All eyes now were bent upon two men standing near the water's edge in close conversation.

"I know the British consul, but the other is a stranger, and evidently a new arrival," Mr. de Courcelles remarked.

As our little crowd came on shore, the British consul advanced to meet them, followed by the stranger.

"Mr. de Courcelles, I have been waiting your arrival to have the pleasure of introducing my friend Lord Gilbert, just from England." A

cordial handshaking followed. But as Mr. de Courcelles presented the young ladies, Adrienne's white, set face startled him, and as she still avoided his glance, naturally he began to read between the lines. While Kittie, who had been quick to detect the scintillations of a great joy in Lord Gilbert's splendid eyes, felt the very air was permeated with mystery.

Presently Adrienne said in low tones to her father,

"I must explain that I have just sustained a little shock of surprise in having discovered in Lord Gilbert a former acquaintance, known in the South as Colonel Strafford, a Confederate officer."

"Good gracious!" Kittie exclaimed to herself, "what other revelation is in store for us?"

The parties here concerned being of the highest social culture, this little embarrassing episode was passed over with exquisite tact, subsiding into the usual well-bred ease that ever characterizes people of refined circles. Lord Gilbert assisted Adrienne into the waiting brougham, bending, and making the request to see her that evening at her father's residence, which she granted with quivering lips, as she glanced up into his face from the depths of her lovely eyes, while her heart was throbbing wildly at being again in the sunshine of his presence. The color now coming and going in her cheeks

revealed to Lord Gilbert how deeply she was moved by the ordeal she was undergoing, despite her effort at self-control. Later on, his card having been sent up to Adrienne, Lord Gilbert sat waiting in the drawing-room of Mr. de Courcelles's residence, hungry for the sight of her sweet face. It was not long before he heard the silken folds of her evening dress making a swishing rustle as they swept the floor, when he caught his breath with momentary excitement, then turning gazed with all his eyes upon the exquisite dreamy loveliness of the vision of womanhood before him, but met her with the high-bred delicacy and courtesy that ever distinguished his bearing, his voice betraying restrained feeling as he spoke.

"I feel that I am justly under the ban of your censure. I have been on the way all these weeks, and would have been here some time ago, but for a serious accident that forced us to put into port, where we were delayed undergoing repairs. I wanted to confess in person that I was not under my full name in the United States. I thought a title over there would seem extremely out of place. Besides, I wished to avoid annoyance of any sort. But that I should lose my heart to a dear little American girl, I did not take into consideration. I dreaded the effect of a confession. It had the appearance of duplicity. But, surely, my darling, you can-

not find it in your heart to withhold from an humble suppliant your generous forgiveness?" He almost trembled during the pause that followed, as he noticed the proud poise of the head. But the next moment as she glanced up into his face he saw nothing in the depths of those fascinating eyes save a melting tenderness.

"During this interval of silence from you I have told myself over and over that to be miserable would be foolish imagination. For what would be the good of resisting one's destiny? So, I resolved to be courageous and face life without any silly repinings, and try and fill up my days doing good for others. But," now glancing timidly at him, "your explanation, and the fact that you are *here*, has changed everything, and as we are commanded to forgive to the uttermost, I can afford to be magnanimous." Her lips parted with a tremulous smile just as he drew her tenderly within his arms, and bent his head to seal the agreement with a fond, clinging caress upon their witching beauty.

Inasmuch as Lord Gilbert had been recently attached to the diplomatic corps at Washington, therefore due in the United States at an early date, it was arranged that the marriage should take place at once, thus giving him time to visit with his bride his estates in England before sailing for America.

At this juncture Adrienne received a letter from Mrs. Vincent, descanting in glowing terms upon Washington society. The most important and startling feature in her communication was that of the marriage of Miss Belle Conrad and Sir Edward Havelock, which, the writer declared, had taken the young lady's circle of friends by storm, while to no one—remembering the young lady's penchant for a certain Confederate officer—had it been more of a surprise than herself.

It seemed to Adrienne the irony of fate that she would have to live always a near neighbor to Lady Belle Havelock. "Yet," she thought, "I only hope she will make him happy as he so justly deserves," and she sighed deeply.

In the mean time, the sudden announcement of Adrienne's marriage had turned Kittie's smiles to tears. She had been startled beyond self-control almost, and in the privacy of her own room gave way to bitter sobs. Traces of tears were on her cheeks when she appeared at the table, which Mr. de Courcelles, now silent and abstracted, did not seem to observe. There was only a pretense at a meal, while Adrienne, preoccupied also, now and then shot a sympathetic side-glance at her father. The entire situation grew unbearable to Kittie. She rose from the table and left the room. Flying upstairs to her room she threw herself into a chair,

giving way completely. She was overwhelmed at the thought of having to leave Adrienne's home, where she had never been so happy before—till the aching in her heart became insupportable, suddenly crying aloud, "Oh! why did I come here? Surely it is better never to have known than to have to forget." At last she drew herself together, drying her eyes, then, rising, bathed her face. The next moment, crossing the hall to Adrienne's rooms, whom she found busily engaged superintending the packing of their trunks and boxes, she said in rapid tones,

"I am going below, Adrienne, and take one more turn on the lawn, one more lingering look over this lovely place, that I may carry the fragrance of it away in my heart, and the beauty of it a lasting picture in my mind. For I realize that I am going never to return, while it will be *your* privilege to go and come at pleasure." Closing the door, she ran as though pursued down the stairway, landing at the foot directly opposite the library, where remembering the life-like picture of Mr. de Courcelles hanging on the wall in this room, she could not resist the temptation to enter. Pushing open the door and going a few steps inside, suddenly she stood transfixed at seeing Mr. de Courcelles himself sitting beside a table, with bowed head resting on his hands, his attitude betraying an absorb-

ing grief. Forgetting herself at sight of his sorrow, she went forward timidly.

"Mr. de Courcelles," she said, with beating heart, "I now see your sore distress at having to give Adrienne up, just as you were so happy in her sweet society, and I cannot refrain from expressing to you my sincere sympathy."

He had risen from his chair, and now stood erect, looking down into Kittie's eyes with a smile.

"You are a sweet comforter, and your words are very true. However, in view of the fact of having so lovely a daughter, it is the only result for which I should have been prepared. But, in addition to this," and now the musical tones of his voice trembled with a tender inflection, "I am suffering in anticipation of your leaving with her. The thought has given me an indescribable shock. Can it be that, since I have had the happiness of knowing you—of having had your beaming presence in my home all these weeks—I must give you up? Is it possible, Kittie, you intend deserting me?"

This sudden revelation of his love entered a sunbeam of joy into Kittie's soul. He was answered by the radiance in her flushed face, though in much confusion she took refuge in quite a commonplace answer—

"But, Mr. de Courcelles, you know that I must return to America with Adrienne."

"The simplest solution to the matter, under existing circumstances, will be that we are married at once. Will you consent to have it all arranged accordingly?" his voice vibrating with the excess of his feelings.

Kittie bowed her head a little, a thousand emotions playing over her charming face, then looking up, flashed a sweet, timid glance into his eyes as she replied,

"It is all so wondrous strange, but as I cannot persuade myself to leave you, I freely consent to what you may think best," and for a moment the solemnity and softness in her eyes had chased away the usual merry gleam. But Kittie suddenly vanished, leaving Mr. de Courcelles half-bewildered with the great joy that flooded his soul.

The evening of this memorable day closed in the usual way. Adrienne and Kittie had repaired to the drawing-room in evening dress, as was their custom, but neither felt disposed for conversation. They were sitting quite silent in the quiet hour, when Mr. de Courcelles came in, with the usual reserve in his bearing that marked him different from other men. His eyes at once sought Kittie's, who returned the courteous bend of his head with a bewitching smile. Seating himself near them, he began, the tone of his voice presaging something of importance to be discussed, his foreign accent,

thought by every one to be so indescribably fascinating, now particularly noticeable.

"Has it ever occurred to you, Adrienne, how very lonely I shall be when you two young ladies are really gone, who have been the sunshine of my house these weeks? I have been thinking over this critical hour in my life, and have come to propose a compromise. Suppose you leave Kittie with me."

Startled at this, Adrienne's face became so white that Kittie was struck with alarm. But after reflecting seriously awhile, her innate good sense asserted itself, as, turning to him, she said, though there was suppressed excitement in her voice,

"Father, I can appreciate your feelings and position, which upon sober reflection I must admit are natural. But I must own to have been strangely dense in the matter. I want to assure you that, having no real objection, I shall be happy in the thought that *you* are happy. Surely I have been simply stupid not to have expected this. Kittie," now directing a penetrating gaze into Kittie's happy eyes, "*is this* the outcome of our long friendship and attachment?"

Kittie threw a droll, mischievous glance toward Adrienne's grave, questioning face, as she answered, with a breezy smile,

"The happy event of my future happiness, Adrienne, was shadowed forth when I felt my heart strangely warmed toward directing your tottering infant footsteps at school in carefully teaching your first ideas how to shoot. Surely there is a destiny that shapes our lives."

Mr. de Courcelles laughed, in which Adrienne joined.

"How absurd you are, Kittie. But is it possible you love him well enough to exile yourself for his sake?"

"I am very willing to undergo the exile, as you term it, and am so happy that I feel as though some fairy has touched me with her wand of enchantment," a soft flush suffusing her cheek as she met the eyes of the man who was so soon to be her husband.

On the following morning two marriages were solemnized in the small English chapel. The brides wore gray traveling dresses of rich material, made over silk of the same color, their hats corresponding in shade.

Happiness glowed in Adrienne's beautiful face, while the rapture of delight shone in the depths of Kittie's blue eyes; for it was her happy wedding-day. All the world seemed brighter, a sweeter fragrance came from the flowers, and her life seemed filled with a new spirit of beauty and thankfulness. Late in the afternoon Mr. de Courcelles and Kittie were

standing on the quay in the soft blowing sea breeze, waving a tender adieu to Lord and Lady Gilbert, until the steamer had drifted far, and finally was lost to sight in the mists of the sea.

From contending emotions of sadness and gladness Kittie's eyes were drowned in tears. Her husband, presently leaning forward to catch a glimpse of her face, was struck with contrition at sight of her deluged orbs.

"My darling, my sweet wife," his voice was infinitely caressing, "it is because of my tender love for you that I shall give up living in the East, and return to civilization. You must not, for *my* sake, renounce all that will make life harmonious and pleasant for you."

Kittie's tears suddenly ceased, as she raised her eyes to his and said, with emphasis,

"I would not for the world agree to your making so great a sacrifice. It is my cherished desire to live always in this exquisite land. With my husband I have found a life filled with the spirit of blessing, a happiness in perfect love." She said this softly, sweetly, with bewitching tenderness. We leave them under the benediction of an Eastern cloudless sky, now radiant from the after-glow of the setting sun.

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